

HOW TO USE CULTURAL BIASES TO WIN: The intersection of Cultural Theory and Sun Zi's *Art of War*

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Abstract

Sun Zi's *Art of War* is the oldest military treatise in the world and still the most relevant. It can be applied to any area of human experience that involves conflict of some sort and has been applied to a variety of problems by everyday practitioners and academic scholars alike. Despite its importance, it is mostly ignored by the social scientific community at large. In an attempt to rectify this situation, I examine the *Art of War* as data from a sociological perspective, namely, that of Cultural Theory, which is used to comprehend sociocultural reality. Furthermore, I invert what might be an 'intellectually imperialist' relationship and examine Cultural Theory from the perspective of the *Sun Zi*. The overall goal is to discover how their mutual interaction might be utilized by scholars in studies of the *Sun Zi*, Cultural Theory, and related topics as well as how it might allow people to view how they live differently. The results of these close readings demonstrate that the *Art of War* is rooted in two intertwining cultures, the hierarchic and the individualist—the better for a general to manipulate his enemy and emerge victorious in battle. Cultural Theory, on the other hand, can be fruitfully applied to the issues that concern the *Art of War* such as knowing one's enemy and deception, and, thus, used to win.

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1 Introduction

Over 2,500 years old Sun Zi's *Art of War* is recognized as the earliest extant of all military classics. It is also recognized by many experts as the most eminent of military treatises whose extensive influence is impossible to estimate. From its origins in the second half of the Era of Warring States (c. 475 to 221 B.C.) to the current military doctrine of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the *Art of War* has been the foremost military manual in Chinese history. Since its introduction to Japan, it has also been essential to the history of Japanese military thought, adopted and adapted by both shoguns like Tokugawa Ieyasu and swordsmen like Musashi Miyamoto alike. In 1772 J. J. M. Amiot, one of the first Jesuit priests to visit China, translated the *Art of War* into French. It is rumored that both Napoleon and the Nazi high command sat at Sun Zi's feet. While this is highly unlikely, it is known that Finnish field marshal (and later president) Mannerheim and his second-in-command lieutenant general Airo, successful military leaders in two wars against the Soviet Union, were both avid readers of this translation. The *Sun Zi*'s principles were also utilized by Ho Chi Minh and his generals in their defeat of both the French and later the Americans. While the *Art of War* was first translated into English in 1905 and influenced strategists such as British captain B. H. Liddell Hart, it took their loss to the Vietcong for the United States military to take the *Art of War* seriously. They eventually made it a mandatory part of the curricula for all branches of the military such as on the Marine Corps' "Commandant's Reading List". Its reach does not end with the military community, however, for it has made its way from being elite military knowledge to becoming a part of popular culture.

There are over 250 books in English alone on the *Art of War* many of which are written to be applied to non-military fields from Japanese corporate strategy to dating. There are websites devoted to the *Sun Zi* such as *Sonshi.com* which is endorsed by recognized specialists and hosts a forum where everyday practitioners can discuss the modern applicability of Sun Zi's military theory. The *Art of War*'s title is used in movies, its sayings appear in hip hop songs, and its strategic designs are applied to different sports worldwide. There are also a number of academic articles¹ from a wide array of disciplines

¹ See Dimovski, et al. (2012) for an impressive reference list of books and articles.

seeding the *Sun Zi*'s ideas in their fields. Some are not so surprising such as its use in many varieties of management science, while others are more surprising like its application to construction work. Sun Zi's principles are even taught in university courses such as "Operator Businesses in Telecommunication Networks" at Aalto University in Finland. On the whole, there seems to be a place in modern society for Sun Zi's counsel.

The *Art of War* offers advice for every sort of conflict that humans can experience. According to its pages, one must know one's opponent and know one's self. The work proposes a way to perceive an opponent and deceive them so what they perceive is what one wants them to perceive. Deception is not the goal in and of itself but, rather, the surprise that comes when one strikes unexpectedly at an opponent's weakest point bringing about their complete capitulation. Ideally, this should be done *without* any fighting at all. At the very least, victory should be achieved with the minimal amount of effort (including violence, as in the context of war) and resources. It also teaches one to remain flexible when reality fluctuates as it is prone to do because, on top of the uncertainty of one's knowledge, one's opponents are most likely using deception as well. Overall, the *Sun Zi* can be seen as a method for dealing with the complexity of contemporary life so that one could make prompt decisions and take effective action. Even with its growing relevance, there have been little to no attempts made, either in popular or academic works, to comprehend the inner workings of the *Art of War* from a sociological standpoint.

The lack of attention to the treatise from the sociological community, never mind from the social scientific community at large, becomes an opportunity for me to examine an important classic from a much needed perspective. This is what makes the approach taken in this paper so distinctive. While it is so that sociological concepts and theories are just metaphors and models of social reality and cannot fully account for its complexity, they can be powerful heuristic devices or ways to transform people's perspectives so that they can discover something new about the way they live. Enter 'Cultural Theory'.

Cultural Theory (CT), first developed by British anthropologist and sociological thinker Mary Douglas then furthered by her followers, has also been applied widely from political science to policy-making. The theory is grounded in the foundational thought of sociologist Émile Durkheim but also draws from several other notable anthropological and sociological thinkers. Cultural Theory proposes that there are at minimum four (or even

five) ways of life or ‘cultures’ (not to be confused with languages, nationalities or ethnicities) each with their own rationality. Each culture bounds everything its adherents *think* they know, thus, everything they believe. In this context, ‘knowledge’ and ‘belief’ are social and cultural phenomena, which act as constraints for people’s choices and actions. People’s choices and actions, in turn, further reinforce the cultural boundaries and perpetuate their respective social systems. Shocks to the system in the form of surprising events, manipulation from others, and so on can bring about change but only from one of the cultures to another. In any given society, regardless of the time or place, all four (or five) cultures are present to different degrees and in shifting alliances as each culture vies for dominance over the others. If social reality is as Cultural Theory portrays it, then what culture or alliance of cultures is the *Art of War* entrenched? It is in this way that Cultural Theory can prompt a sociological reading of the ancient Chinese military masterpiece.

Even so, it may seem obvious that, because it is a military treatise, that the *Sun Zi* would directly or indirectly promote a hierarchical culture (the military being *the* hierarchical way of life *par excellence*), but that is not necessarily the case. At least that is not *only* the case. It seems that the *Art of War* stems from an alliance of two cultures represented traditionally in sociology by the ‘hierarchy’ and the ‘market’. On its own such a finding might just be a sociological curiosity and, even, yet another form of Western ‘intellectual imperialism’. What this finding suggests, though, is that while the *Art of War* is composed and compiled by different authors over several decades and ‘loosely cobbled’ together as a consequence, it is cemented together by a unified (albeit, hybridized) culture. Furthermore, it is done so, in effect, to generate a general that knows how to manipulate the enemy and win battles. Inquiry should not and does not stop there, though. Inverting the prior relationship between Cultural Theory and the *Art of War* as well prompts a Sun Zi-inspired reading of Cultural Theory. This reveals how one could feasibly utilize cultural biases, or what people believe based on their way of life, to emerge victorious in a contest. Taken together, these findings can be both interesting and advantageous for the sociologist, the cultural theorist, the scholar and the practitioner of the *Sun Zi* alike.

1.1 Research questions

As I stated above my first research question is derived from reading the *Art of War* through the lens of Cultural Theory. “What kind of culture does the *Art of War* advance?” The second research question is derived from reading Cultural Theory through the lens of the *Art of War*. “How can cultural biases be used to emerge victorious in a conflict?”

1.2 Structure of the paper

The precise nature of how I go about answering my research questions in this paper is not a straightforward process, and it is not meant to be. The process involves an alternation between the ‘data’, in this case, the *Art of War* and the ‘theory’, in this case, Cultural Theory. The goal is to induce ‘abductive reasoning’ which can help me discover or invent a novel approach (or approaches) to the *Art of War*, Cultural Theory, and their possible applications. I designed the paper to reconstruct this process within the parameters of a master’s thesis. While all of the conventional sections of a research paper such as the ‘introduction’, the ‘literature review’, ‘method’, ‘results’ and ‘discussion’ are included, they are not arranged in the ‘usual’ format. Instead, in Section 2, I present my ‘methodology’ or the underlying logic which runs through this specific research process. It is based on C. Wright Mills “intellectual craftsmanship”, an admittedly atypical choice for a methodology. This section also includes what abductive reasoning is and how it is (and can be) utilized in social scientific research. In Section 3, I introduce Sun Zi, the *Art of War*, and some of its historical and philosophical context. In Section 4, I thoroughly review Douglasian Cultural Theory. Section 5 contains the results of my sociological reading of the *Art of War*, which is meant to be more suggestive than definitive. Then, in Section 6, I discuss how Cultural Theory could be utilized for the ‘art of war’. Finally, Section 7 succinctly concludes the paper.

2 Abductive reasoning in research practice

2.1 Mills’ “Intellectual craftsmanship”

Through methodology one asks how to “go about studying a phenomenon” (Silverman 2001:4). In general, methodology is one’s strategy of setting up and carrying

out a research project to acquire and/or construct knowledge² through certain methods of data collection and data analysis all of which are held together by some internal logic (e.g. Wellington et al. 2005:107). While there are a multitude of philosophically and/or pragmatically grounded methodology books which provide more specific guidelines to choose from, I kept it ‘simple’ and turned to the most popular (and for good reason, in my opinion) of sociological writings, C. Wright Mills’ (1959) classic *The Sociological Imagination*, specifically the appendix entitled “On Intellectual Craftsmanship” (195-226). Sociologist and methodologist Clive Seale (2004:11) introduces C. Wright Mills’ “intellectual craftsmanship” as a more informal practice that is barely covered in conventional methodology books but which is actually vital to research. I find that the underlying logic, on which it is based, is more ‘formal’ than might be supposed.

For Mills, an “intellectual craftsman” is one (a social scientist) whose work (scholarship as the practice of a craft) is inseparable from his/her life. This being the case, one’s experience is an essential component of one’s scholarship; one should trust in one’s own experience and, at the same time, be skeptical of it. As methodologist Martyn Hammersley (2004) describes it, from the perspective of social research as craft “research competence” comes from “the building up of skills [and, thus, the gaining of more experience]”. These “skills are by their nature practical rather than technical. In other words, they cannot be codified in such a way as to be transmitted simply by explicit instruction from one person to another.” (Hammersley 2004:551). Since life and work are not separate, for Mills, the improvement of one’s professional skills assists in the development of one’s personal life and vice versa. In my case, the research topic of this paper was always meant as a platform to lead to the discovery of new tools for use inside *and* outside of academia. This is not just for self-development, though, for an intellectual craftsman works on people’s “private troubles” and society’s “public issues” and how they are related to each other. In order to have the time and energy to work on these “problems of substance” he or she should avoid tiring and time-consuming methodological debates (qualitative vs. quantitative, for instance). As sociologist Andrew Abbott (2004:43) puts it,

2 This depends on one’s view of knowledge, in other words, one’s epistemology. So, for example, a realist epistemology (in broad terms) purports to describe characteristics of the world ‘out there’ while a constructivist epistemology (in broad terms) proposes that we cannot transcend our own experience.

“social reality often resists the charms of methodology³”. Thus, to be a “good craftsman”, Mills advises, one should “[s]tand for the primacy of the individual scholar. Avoid the fetishism of method and technique. Let every[one] be [their] own methodologist...[their] own theorist...Above all, seek to develop and to use the sociological imagination.” (Mills 1959:211). For Mills this mostly meant the ability to shift perspectives in order to construct “an adequate view of a total society and its components” (ibid.). He lists seven perspective-shifting heuristic devices (though he does not explicitly call them that) in order to “stimulate the sociological imagination”. These include: keeping a file of notes, quotes, thoughts, etc. that one could empty out then reorganize to foster new associations, finding synonyms of major terms to elaborate on their connotations, casting ideas into types that are then cross-classified via charts and other visual aids, making the opposite assumption, changing a phenomenon’s proportions, doing trans-historical and/or cross-cultural case comparisons, and distinguishing between ‘topics’ and ‘themes’ then arranging them. (Mills, 1959:195-226). Sociologist Margareta Bertilsson (2004:381) contends that for Mills “releasing” the sociological imagination is the “challenge” of abductive reasoning or abduction.

2.2 Abductive reasoning as essential to research of any kind

The term ‘abduction’ was translated into Latin as *abductio* from the Greek *apagōgē* by Julius Pacius, an Aristotelian scholar, in 1597. The etymology *ab* (‘away from’) and *dūcerē* (‘to lead’) suggests being “led away from old to new theoretical insights” (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:170). For almost 300 years, it went neglected until the American philosopher Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) used the term ‘abduction’⁴ to

3 Methodology “books forget...the imaginative voice of whimsy, surprise, and novelty. This discovery side of social science is more systematic than we think. Social scientists use gambits of imagination, mental moves they employ to hasten discovery....formulas for the opening, developing, and realizing of possibilities. Some are general gambits implicit in the nature of argument and description, while others arise in conceptual issues that pervade the disciplines. All of these gambits work within any kind of method. They make up the heuristic of social science, the means by which social science discovers new ideas.” (Abbott 2004:42).

4 Peirce used ‘abduction’, ‘retroduction’, ‘presumption’, and ‘hypothesis’ interchangeably. It was only later on that he used ‘abduction’ specifically for the generation of hypotheses and ‘retroduction’ for the selection of hypotheses (Burch [2001]2010). This can be a point of confusion; for example, social scientists of the critical realist persuasion (e.g. Danermark et al. 2002:80) treat abduction as a distinct part of retroduction. While the case can be made, I view the generating, ranking, and selecting of hypotheses as inclusive but not exhaustive of abductive reasoning, as I describe in more detail below. Therefore, I see no need to distinguish between abduction and retroduction as such. For the sake of consistency, I only make use of the term ‘abduction’ or ‘abductive reasoning’ throughout the paper.

designate a third form of logic separate from deduction and induction. In Peirce's words, "Deduction proves that something *must* be; Induction shows that something is *actually* operative; Abduction merely suggests that something *may be*" (5.171⁵). To elaborate somewhat, deductive inference begins with a rule and looks for results to a case which either validates or falsifies the rule. It is based on Aristotle's axiom of identity (a thing is always equal to itself, so, 'A' is 'A'). A well-known, albeit slightly modified⁶, Peircean (2.623) example of deduction is as follows:

Rule: All the beans from this bag are kidney beans.

Case: These beans are from this bag.

Result: These beans are kidney beans.

Inductive inference begins with results and looks for the rules of a case. It is based on Aristotle's axiom of noncontradiction (a thing cannot be both itself and something else, so, 'A' is not 'non-A'). A Peircean (2.623) example of induction is as follows:

Case: These beans are from this bag.

Result: These beans are kidney beans.

Rule: All the beans from this bag are kidney beans.

Abduction⁷, on the other hand, is when what we initially believe to be the case, that is, what we think we know (a rule) is jarred as the result of something novel or anomalous—a surprising fact. A Peircean (2.623) example of abduction (called 'hypothesis', then) is as follows:

Rule: All the beans from this bag are kidney beans.

Result: These beans are kidney beans.

5 All references to Peirce's work come from the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (eight volumes) and are typically abbreviated CP followed by the volume and page number(s).

6 The original examples concern 'white beans'.

7 The third axiom in traditional logic, presented in Aristotle's *Organon*, is the axiom of the excluded middle (a thing must be one of two mutually exclusive things, so, 'A' is not both 'A' and 'non-A'). This axiom does not undergird abduction. Though, an abductive inference might find that a thing is *both* 'A' and 'non-A'.

Case: These beans are from this bag.

For Peirce, abduction strikes ‘like a flash’ of lightning (5.117). While this implies that it is as uncontrollable as the weather, there are certain ‘weather conditions’ that favor the abductive bolt such as genuine doubt (but also uncertainty, fear, and great pressure to act⁸) which urge one on to further investigation. (C.P. 5.374–375; Reichertz 2004:161). According to Peirce “the action of thought is excited by the irritation of doubt, and ceases when belief is attained; so that the production of belief is the sole function of thought” (5.394). Thus, once the initial stimulus is elicited abduction becomes the only form of inference by which one could discover or invent a feasible, functioning hypothesis to explain the surprising fact (and, I would add, to relieve the dissonance of disbelief). An oft-quoted and up to date definition of abduction along these lines is provided by cognitive scientist Paul Thagard who describes it as “inference to a hypothesis that provides a possible explanation of some puzzling phenomenon” (1988:51-52). Peirce’s (5.189) own depiction is as follows:

“The surprising fact, C, is observed⁹;
But if A were true, C would be a matter of course,
Hence there is reason to suspect that A is true”.

Cunningham, Baratta, and Esping (2005:55) bring Peirce’s view on abductive reasoning in relation to doubt and belief to the fore in the following way:

“[Background of unremarkable experiences] — State of Belief
The surprising fact C is observed — State of Doubt
But if A were true, C would be a matter of course — Abductive Inference
Hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true — Resolving Doubt
[Background of unremarkable experiences] — State of Belief”.

8 Another much less distressful condition in which abduction thrives is “musement” or “Pure Play [which] has no rules” (C.P. 6.458).

9 Though it does not have to be observed (C.P. 5.597; 7.203).

This process of accounting for the anomalous or novel may even foster *new* knowledge, though it is by no means definitive. For Peirce *all* knowledge, scientific or otherwise, is riddled with uncertainty (Bertilsson 2004:378). Instead, this type of inference is conjectural, but while abduction is less rigorous or “weaker” than deduction or induction it is no less important. According to Peirce, all three kinds of inference are indispensable for scientific inquiries.

In the first step of his “scientific method”, as he calls it, is the discovery of a hypothesis via abductive reasoning (C.P. 7.202). The second step is the making of predictions from the hypothesis through deduction. The third step is the search for facts that will confirm the hypothesis through induction. If the necessary facts cannot be found the process iterates until they can be, the goal being, as mentioned above, to convert doubt into belief (C.P. 5.384). For Peirce the use of his scientific method would help to discipline people’s everyday perceptions and elevate them to a more “critical common sense” (Bertilsson 2004:387). Better informed by the believable (though by definition uncertain) conjectures concerning the many surprises that everyday life poses, people could then act accordingly (e.g. C.P. 5.27-28). Despite abduction’s utility, it still took some time for it to become fashionable in academia.

Presently, Peircean abduction is quite prevalent throughout the academy. Most of this attention, however, is either toward abduction as a means of generating plausible hypotheses to explain some surprising event (C.P. 5.171) and/or as a means of evaluating or ‘choosing’, in Peirce’s words, amongst those plausible hypotheses generated, which one is the “best explanation”, in contemporary terminology, for said event (C.P. 7.219)¹⁰. For many social researchers who do not adhere to positivism or its variants (e.g. logical positivism, etc.) as the philosophical paradigm underpinning a social scientific method¹¹, abduction becomes the centerpiece of alternatives to the scientific method in general (e.g. Haig 2005; Ragin and Amoroso 2010) or the underlying logic of particular social scientific methods (e.g. Dey 2004 on grounded theory; Krippendorff [1980]2012 on content analysis; Wodak and Meyer 2001 on critical discourse analysis). For the former ‘group’ abduction,

10 Thus, abduction can be used within the “context of discovery” *and* the “context of justification” (e.g. Timmermans and Tavory 2012:170). Abduction discovers, and it also argues. It “has persuasive force and is thus a rhetorical pattern on a par with but distinct from the enthymeme [deduction] and the paradigm [induction]” (Bybee 1991:296).

11 A positivist scientific method is underwritten by deduction (e.g. Ragin and Amoroso 2010).

deduction, and induction work together in a cyclical fashion similar to Peirce's description of the scientific method. While for the latter, abduction is the outcome of alternating between the different empirical domains of theory (where deduction would be the starting point) and data (where induction would be the starting point). These ways of understanding abduction are not necessarily at odds.

Peirce himself makes numerous interpretations of abduction such as *guessing*, *insight*, or *perception* (just to name three examples) and argues for a metaphysical, theistic, and naturalistic basis for it, which can seem inconsistent and be quite confounding. Whatever one makes of how Peirce attempts to ground abduction, Peirce's arguments are not 'sociological' enough. For example, as we shall see in the section on Cultural Theory in order for something to be 'surprising' to someone it must be so within the purview of their culture; what can be surprising and to whom is taken for granted by Peirce and most other researchers of abductive reasoning. Instead, sociologists Timmermans and Tavory (2012:172) argue that "socially cultivated and cultivatable ways of seeing [should] become the preconditions for abductive reasoning...cultured knowledge provides a way to conceive of abduction as socially located, positional knowledge that can be deepened and marshaled for theory construction." I fully agree. In any case, the usages of abduction show that it is not just alternative frameworks of the scientific method and/ or certain methods that utilize abductive reasoning as their underlying logic. "Peirce's logic [beginning with abduction] is the whole logical apparatus of the physical and social sciences," (Burch [2001]2010). (Burch [2001]2010; Magnani 2001; Peirce 1934-1963; Shank 1998; Timmermans and Tavory 2012).

2.2.1 Heuristic devices and abductive types

Heuristics [originally from the Greek *heuriskein*, 'to discover'] can be used to discover or invent hypotheses as well as be used to select the "best" one (e.g. Schurz 2008). Besides the heuristic devices listed by Mills (1959:212-217), other social scientists (e.g. Abbott 2004; Jaccard and Jacoby 2009) find that heuristics can be utilized for contemplating phenomena and producing insights as well (though they, unfortunately, do not link heuristics to the sociological imagination or abduction). Some of the heuristics Abbott (2004) describes include: using topics and commonplaces from rhetoric and philosophy like Aristotle's four causes, making an analogy, borrowing a method from

another discipline, inverting an assumption, analyzing counterfactuals ('what if' statements), and surveying theoretical debates¹². Jaccard and Jacoby (2009) also list 26+ heuristics in their guide to theory construction and model-building. Some of their heuristics overlap with Mills. In fact, they explicitly list his advice to change the proportion of something one is studying; they also list his advice to try making the opposite assumption and to look at the extremes of a phenomenon, though they do not credit him for the latter two. Some of their heuristics also overlap with Abbott such as promoting the use of analogies and counterfactual thought experiments, for example. Other useful heuristics they mention include: analyzing paradoxical situations, visualization, investigating deviant cases¹³, using both explanations rather than only one of them, and even focusing on one's emotions¹⁴. (Jaccard and Jacoby 2009:48-67). Most of the aforementioned forms of "heuristic-based" musement can be organized as two broad types of abduction, "theoretical abduction" and "manipulative abduction".

According to philosopher and cognitive scientist Lorenzo Magnani (2001, 2005), "theoretical abduction" itself consists of two kinds, "sentential abduction", associated with logic and other verbal or symbolic systems, and "model-based abduction", associated with (mental) visual imagery such as maps, pictures, and so on. Finding synonyms and creating analogies can fall under the rubric of sentential abduction, while cross-classifying types and engaging in visualization can fall under the rubric of model-based abduction. The second broad type of abduction Magnani discusses is "manipulative" or "action-based abduction". It is through the use of external objects such as talking (out loud) to oneself, using one's fingers to count, writing on a piece of paper, or using a computer, etc. that one can think *through* doing. Mills (1959:212) also recognized the usefulness of external objects when he advises that one should keep a file and occasionally reorder the folders' contents to construct new bridges between concepts. As this example of Mills' demonstrates,

12 Timmermans and Tavory (2012:173) concur with Abbott that "existing theories read either as an argument or as a way of argumentation, a way of seeing that may foster further theoretical innovation". Furthermore, for them, the methodological steps of grounded theory such as "field note taking, theoretical sampling, coding along various dimensions, memo writing, constant comparing, and sorting and diagramming memos...when performed against a theoretical background" can also be used to elicit abductive reasoning (ibid. 175).

13 Gathering negative cases or alternative accounts via different theories to explain a phenomenon can also induce abduction (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:176).

14 According to Thagard, "abduction originates with an emotional reaction [i.e. 'puzzlement' and] ends with one, because formation and acceptance of explanatory hypotheses usually produce positive emotions" (2007:228). Magnani (2001) also describes abductive reasoning from emotions.

theoretical *and* manipulative abduction can also be used together as well as in conjunction with a possible third type of abduction. By “revisiting the phenomena”, it is also “a way to harness temporality in the service of theory construction” (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:176). Magnani (2001:115-124) calls the function of time in abductive reasoning “temporal abduction”. Any of the aforementioned scholarly advice can act as means for promoting abduction which can then be converted into full-scale scientific research from “impression” to “attentive observation” to “musing” to “a lively give and take of communion between self and self” to a “specializ[ing]” of “one’s observations and reflections” as Peirce describes it (6.459).

As I have hopefully demonstrated, Mills’ (1959) “On Intellectual Craftsmanship”, while written in an informal manner, provides a way of studying phenomena that can be more formalized. On its own, it comes complete with creative tools (i.e. heuristic devices) and an underlying logic (abduction), rooted in Peirce’s ‘pragmatism’¹⁵, that can act as a ‘force multiplier’ to one’s own thinking and be readily adapted into one’s own methodology. If Mills’ intellectual craftsmanship can help him produce a masterwork like his 1956 *The Power Elite* then it is a powerful tool indeed and worthy of more methodological consideration.

2.2.2 The abductive attitude

The overall aim for the researcher is to cultivate an “*attitude* of preparedness to abandon old convictions and to seek new ones...a state of preparedness for being taken unprepared” when the strike hits (Reichert 2004:163, italics in original). In agreement with sociologist Steve Fuller (2006), I believe that logic, experience, or some admixture of the two does not exhaust how one can bring about knowledge. Still, in utilizing both logic (e.g. Peirce’s scientific method) and experience in an explicit and reflexive manner I can discipline my sociological (scientific) thinking and make it more rigorous. As one can see above, it is not only rigor but rigor in *combination* with imagination that is decisive for (social) scientific endeavors of any kind (Abbot 2004). At bottom, this is what Mills’ ‘sociological imagination’ as abductive reasoning is about—intellectual growth through shifting one’s perspective (that could then be used pragmatically for the betterment of

15 The name he gave his philosophy to differentiate it from the other forms of pragmatism of his day (e.g. Burch [2001]2010).

society). In order for such intellectual growth to occur, one first needs to be surprised, shocked even, so as to instigate the generation of hypotheses for the advancement of thought. While novel or anomalous ideas, things, and events can occur daily to varying degrees, one can also instigate novelty and anomaly through a multiplicity of means, e.g., heuristic devices. “Often, the process of puzzling through the data not only will create a new puzzle but may actually construct a new game with new rules for thinking about the relationship between different pieces” (Timmermans and Tavory 2012:177). Methodological rigidity, though, does not allow the intellectual atmosphere one requires to “give accidents a chance” (Reichert 2004:63)¹⁶. I am a firm believer that “unfettered thought is the most essential of research methods” (Andreski 1972:109). Thus, I utilize heuristic devices and abductive reasoning in its diversity to help kindle then re-kindle my thinking. The end goal of this paper is to see things (and show things) from a new perspective, in the case of this paper, the *Art of War* (the subject of the next section) rendered sociologically and Cultural Theory (the subject of the section after next) rendered artfully.

3 Sun Zi’s *Art of War*

3.1 Sun Zi and the *Art of War* in context

3.1.1 The historical Sun Zi

Little is really known about Sun Zi’s life¹⁷. Most scholars conclude that he lived from about 544 BC to 496 BC during the long-running Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046-256 BC) in the era known as the “Spring and Autumn Period” (c. 771-476 or as late as 403 BC). This would make him a younger contemporary of both Kong Fu Zi (Confucius) and Lao Zi, founder of philosophical Taoism. According to traditional accounts such as Sima

¹⁶ Though, it is conceivable that even closely following a methodology or strategy, for instance, in a context that it is not usually used could help produce abductive reasoning.

¹⁷ A biography of sorts could be compiled from a variety of sources with varying degrees of reliability and could go something like the following: Sun Wu was born in the northern state of Qi in what is now the Shandong province (though, “The Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yue” claims that he came from the state of Wu). Originally, his family’s surname was Chen and then Tian. When Sun Wu’s grandfather was awarded a piece of property by the king of Qi for military services rendered, he was officially renamed “Sun” which means ‘grandson’. By Sun Wu’s time, though, his family was shih, or nobility that had lost their estate, due to the political upheavals of the period. Most of the shih became roving academics, of some sort, for their subsistence, but Sun Wu, born into an aristocratic family that was both literate and expert in war, became a mercenary. For unknown reasons he fled from his home state of Qi and went to the southeastern state of Wu where he would eventually become known as the sage-general “Master Sun”. (e.g. Griffith 1963; Mair 2007).

Qian's *Shi ji* ("The Records of the Grand Historian"), by 500 BC Sun Wu had written the thirteen chapters¹⁸ of the *Art of War*. In 512 BC he presented it to King Helu (or Helü) of the state of Wu. This is the setting of the infamous account¹⁹ about how the man who would be called Sun Zi demonstrated his skill in generalship to the King of Wu in order to procure employment. How Sun Wu lived and how he died is not known beyond this. According to Victor Mair, Sinologist and translator of the *Sun Zi*, the reason that it is not known how he lived or died is because 'Sun Wu' never existed in the first place²⁰.

Briefly, Mair's argument goes as follows: neither "The Records" nor "The Spring and Autumn Annals of Wu and Yue", which corroborate its account of Sun Zi, are considered historically accurate. For one, the *Art of War* could not have been written during the Spring and Autumn period. Close analysis of anachronisms in the text such as terms, technology, techniques, and so on²¹ demonstrates that it was composed, 100 to 150 years after²² Sima Qian's account, which would place its authorship during the Warring States period (as early as 475 or as late as 403 to 221 BC)²³. The Warring States period is a time

18 Since paper was not invented yet, it was probably "written with ink made of soot on sections of bamboo or on thin wooden slips" as was usually the case (Griffith 1963:14).

19 Upon presenting his thirteen chapters to the king of Wu, Sun Wu was asked if his principles of, say, troop movements could be applied to anyone. Sun Wu replied, "Yes". He then decided to test him by having Sun Wu turn the king's harem of 180 concubines into soldiers. Sun Wu began by dividing them up into two companies. He next appointed Helu's two favorite concubines as the captains of each company. Then Sun Wu gave the order to face right, but the concubines giggled. Sun Wu responded by saying that as the general he was responsible for making certain that the soldiers comprehended his commands. So, he repeated the command, and, once again, the concubines giggled. He repeated the instructions three times and explained them five more times. Again he responded that the general is responsible for making certain that the soldiers comprehended his commands, but if they were not followed, even after being made clear, then it was a violation of military law on the part of the officers. Sun Wu ordered the king's two favorite concubines to be executed. The king protested, "Without these two concubines my food will not taste sweet." Sun Wu explained that once a general was chosen by a ruler it was the general's duty to complete his charge by any means necessary, despite the ruler's objections. So they were executed, and new captains from among the concubines were appointed in their place. Now, fully aware of the price for disregarding their orders, both companies of concubines performed their drills perfectly. With Sun Wu by his side King Helu subdued the states of Chu, Qi, and Qin and became the hegemon of the period. (Based on the *Shi ji*'s account as translated by Griffith 1963:58-59). This account basically comprises Sun Wu's 'biography'.

20 He is not alone in believing that Sun Wu as Sun Zi did not exist at all but is instead a legendary figure (e.g. Griffith 1963:1-12).

21 "Tradition holds that the Sun Zi was a product of the late Spring and Autumn period, but — judging both from internal and external evidence — this is completely impossible. Everything that the Sun Zi has to say about the pattern of war, battle tactics, the conduct of armies, strategic planning, and weaponry is irrelevant to the Spring and Autumn period but perfectly compatible with the Warring States period." (Mair 2007:27-28).

22 According to Mair's estimates, it was composed over a span of time beginning in 345 and ending in 272 BC (2007:29), for he argues that Sun Zi's work, like other works of its time, is a composite text.

23 Others (e.g. Sawyer 2007), however, argue that Sun Zi was who the "Records" and "Annals" say he was—general, strategist, and author of the *Art of War*. They argue that anachronisms found in the *Art of War* do not

of continuous warfare among the seven states of Zhao, Chu, Qi Qin, Han, Wei, and Yan who fought to dominate eastern China. More importantly, ‘Sun Wu’ (as Sun Zi) is a mythic figure composed of two separate historical personages, Wu Zixu²⁴, a hero of the Spring and Autumn Period, and Sun Bin (c. 380-316 BC during the Warring States period), author of his own, closely related *bing fa* called the *Military Methods*²⁵ and, it is claimed by Sima Qian in the *Shi ji*²⁶, ‘descendant’ of Sun Zi. In sum, Mair ascribes the majority of the *Art of War* to Sun Bin²⁷ to whom the title of “Master Sun” should only be credited (see Mair

necessarily point to a later date of authorship. Instead, it is quite reasonable to assume that the teaching of Sun Zi’s military strategy was passed down through the generations to Sun Bin and other descendants or to a school of adherents who revised and supplemented the work during that time (ibid. 151-152, 421-422).

24 It is *he* who fled to Wu from his hometown of Chu because his father and brother were slain by the king. It is also *he*, rather than Sun Wu, that helped King Helu of Wu become hegemon of the region (Mair 2007:10, 12-13).

25 “Once the thirteen chapters of the *Sun Zi* assumed canonical form (before the middle of the third century BC), the residue of Sun Zi materials were shunted off into the [16 chapters of the] *Sun Bin*” (Mair 2007:22). In conjunction with the historical evidence that Sun Wu most likely did not exist while Sun Bin most likely did, Mair also points out that the texts’ individual styles further corroborate this. Sun Wu’s *Art of War* is “a pastiche of apothegms loosely patched together” while Sun Bin’s *Military Methods* “consists of dialogs with historical personages, often embedded in a believable narrative context” like other military treatises of the time (ibid. 63, n. 28).

26 While there is other historical evidence corroborating Sun Bin’s existence, Mair (2007:10-12, 17) sees his biography in the *Shi ji* as more ‘believable’ than the one preceding it on Sun Wu.

27 ‘Bin’ means ‘kneecapped’. How he got his name as told in his biography, found in the *Shi ji*, is worth citing in its entirety.

“More than a hundred years after Sun Wu died there was Sun Bin. Bin was born between E and Juan [in what is today Shandong Province]. He was a descendant of Sun Wu. Sun Bin once studied the methods of war (*bingfa*) together with Pang Juan. After Pang Juan took up service in Wei, he obtained a command under King Hui (r. 369–335 BC), but thought his own ability inferior to Sun Bin’s and secretly had a man summon Sun Bin. When Bin arrived, Pang Juan grew fearful that Sun was more worthy than himself. Jealous of him, he had both his feet cut off and his face tattooed as punishment by law, hoping that Sun would retire and refuse to appear.

An envoy from Qi went to Liang. Sun Bin, since he was a convict who had suffered the punishment of mutilation, met with the Qi envoy in secret and advised him. The Qi envoy thought him remarkable and secretly carried Bin to Qi with him in his carriage. Qi’s general Tian Ji thought much of Sun Bin and made him his guest. Ji raced horses and gambled heavily with the Noble Scions of Qi several times. Sun Zi noticed that the horses’ speed was not much different and that the horses fell into high, middle, and low grades. After this, Sun Zi told Tian Ji, “Just bet heavily, My Lord, and I can make you the winner.”

Tian Ji confidently agreed and bet a thousand pieces of gold with King Wei (r. 378–343 BC) and the Noble Scions of Qi on a race. Just before the wager Sun Zi said, “Now match their high-grade horses with your low-grade horses, take your high-grade horses to match their middlegrade horses, and take your middle-grade horses to match their low-grade horses.”

After they raced the three grades of horses, Tian Ji lost once but won twice and eventually gained the king’s thousand pieces of gold. After this, Ji presented Sun Zi to King Wei. King Wei questioned him on the arts of war and made him his counselor.

Some time later, Wei attacked Zhao. Zhao was hard pressed and sought help from Qi. King Wei of Qi wanted to make Sun Bin commander, but Sun declined: “A mutilated criminal will never do.” King Wei then made Tian Ji commander and Sun Zi his counselor.

2007: 9-23 for the full argument). Based on the evidence presented by Mair and other scholars I lean toward this interpretation. (Griffith, 1963; Mair, 2007; Sawyer, 2007). The next contextual item that can help to understand the *Art of War* better concerns its connection with philosophical Taoism²⁸.

3.1.2 The *Art of War* and Taoism

Due to space constraints I only touch on some of the key philosophical concepts of Taoism as they relate to the *Art of War*. I do this by comparing and contrasting the *Art of War* with the foundational text of Taoism, Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing* (*Tao Te Ching*) in the form of the chart (Table 3.1) below.

Sun occupied a wagon where he sat and drew up plans and strategies (*ji mou*). Tian Ji wanted to lead the troops to Zhao. Sun Zi said, "To untangle a snarled mess, one does not raise his fists, and to stop a fight one does not grab or bind. Seize him at his throat and charge him where he is defenseless; his formations attacked, his power constrained, he will retire of his own accord. Liang and Zhao are attacking each other now; their swift soldiers and picked troops are sure to be exhausted outside on the battlefield, their aged and infirm exhausted inside the cities. It would be better for My Lord to lead the troops in a rush to Da Liang; block its roads and highways, and strike it when still undefended. Liang is sure to release Zhao and save itself. I would thus in one swoop raise the siege of Zhao and exhaust Wei [i.e., Liang]."

Tian Ji followed his advice and Wei did indeed leave Handan, and fought with Qi at Guiling. Qi crushed the Liang army.

Thirteen years later, Wei and Zhao attacked Han. Han informed Qi of its straits. Qi had Tian Ji take command and go to Han's rescue. He rushed straight to Da Liang. Wei's commander Pang Juan [Sun Bin's old enemy] heard this, left Han, and returned to Wei, but Qi's army had already passed him and advanced west into Wei. Sun Zi told Tian Ji, "These troops of Three Jin have always been both fierce and courageous, and have little regard for Qi, since Qi has a name for cowardice. A skilled fighter acts according to the situation and directs the course of events by offering the enemy advantages. According to the arts of war, 'when one races after advantage for a hundred tricents [an ancient Chinese unit of distance], the commander falls; when one races after advantage for fifty tricents, only half the army arrives.' When Qi's army enters Wei territory, have them make cooking fires for a hundred thousand; the next day make fires for fifty thousand; and the day after make fires for thirty thousand."

On the third day of Pang Juan's march, Pang rejoiced. "I knew Qi's troops were cowards; three days after entering my territory, over half their officers and men have fled." He abandoned his infantry and covered two days' distance in one day with lightly armed, picked soldiers, pursuing Qi's troops. Sun Zi judged that they would reach Maling at dusk. The road through Maling was narrow and there were numerous barriers on both sides where troops could be hidden. Sun stripped the bark off a great tree and carved on it, "Pang Juan died at the foot of this tree." After this he ordered the best archers in Qi's army to hide along both sides of the road with ten-thousand crossbows and arranged a signal. "When you see a brand at dusk, fire in concert."

As he expected, Pang Juan reached the foot of the stripped tree at night, saw the inscription, and struck a fire to illuminate it. Before he had finished reading Sun's inscription, the Qi army's ten-thousand crossbows all fired at once and Wei's army was thrown into chaos and confusion. Pang Juan, realizing that he had been outwitted and his troops defeated, cut his throat: "Now this whelp's name is made!"

The Qi army, following up on their victory, crushed Pang's army, captured Wei's Heir, Shen, and returned. Sun Bin's name was renowned throughout the world because of this; his *bingfa* ("methods of war") is transmitted to the present generation." (from Sima Qian's *Shi ji* in Mair 2007:14-17).

28 The *Sun Zi* is twice included in the canon of Taoist texts (Mair 2007:47).

Table 3.1: Comparisons and contrasts between Sun Zi’s <i>Art of War</i> and Lao Zi’s the <i>Dao De Jing</i>		
(After Combs 2000; Ma 2001; Mair 2007; Raphals 1992; Treat and Croghan 2001)		
Comparisons		
Title:	<i>Sun Zi</i>	<i>Dao De Jing</i>
Dating: Traditional	Late Spring and Autumn period	
Actual	About two centuries later during second half of 4 th century BC.	
Authorship: Traditional	“hazy, legendary figure” (Sun Wu)	"vague, semi-divine founder” (Lao Zi)
Actual	the work of several authors and editors over a significant amount of time	
Style:		
short, pithy sayings vague enough to be applied widely to different contexts yet detailed enough to provide practical advice		
Themes:		
1. Holistic and dynamic character of human experience		
2. Self-development		
3. Opposites as mutually causal		
4. Constant change		
5. <i>Tao/dao</i> ²⁹		
6. <i>Wu-wei</i> ³⁰		

29 According to the Taoist 'Way', "all things are relative, all opposites blend, all contrasts are harmonized. The One is tao. It is the total spontaneity of all things. All is so-of-itself. Tao therefore can 'do everything by doing nothing'" (Parrinder 1983:333 in Combs 2002:281).

As one can see from the chart above, while there are comparable perspectives between the *Sun Zi* and the *Dao De Jing*, scholars do not agree to what degree Taoism influenced the authors of the *Art of War*. Despite this lack of consensus, Taoism is a significant feature of the text's original setting.

3.2 Some stylistic and compositional features of the Art of War

The original text of the *Art of War* is written in ancient Chinese with a style of language that is pithy and almost poetic. It utilizes rhetorical devices such as repetition, parallelism, and lists giving it a compact logic that would not tax the memory. Taken together, these features suggest that the *Art of War* was initially orally transmitted as sayings and later joined together and added to in a “loosely cobbled structure” (Mair 2007:30-32, 34). The dating and the arrangement of the various chapters also support these findings.

If one arranges the chapters according to the chronological order of the dates Mair (2007) provides, one finds that chapters 9 (345 B.C.), 10 (342 B.C.), 8 (336 B.C.?), and 11 (330 B.C.) form the infantry-centered ‘core’ of the *Art of War*, most likely written or orally transmitted by Sun Bin (ca. 380-ca. 325 B.C.). Chapter 7 also belongs to this group content-wise, but it was written in 317 B.C. Still, as a group, these chapters focus on types of terrain while placing extra emphasis on the tactical positioning of troops in relation to them. Chapters 6 (316 B.C.), 5 (314 B.C.), 4 (313 B.C.), 3 (312 B.C.), 2 (311), 1 (309 B.C.) deliberate on primary strategy. If they are broken down even further chapters 1 through 3 relate to general military doctrine and method where chapter 1 concerns making computations before battle, chapter 2 combat in the battlefield, and chapter 3 conquering cities. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 get increasingly more abstract with 4 and 5 relating to form and formlessness while chapter 6 relates to emptiness and fullness, “the most abstract notions of all”. Chapters 12 (310 B.C.) and 13 (272 B.C. more than 25 years after chapter 1, the penultimate chapter chronologically) concern more expert subject matter, incendiary attacks and the use of spies, respectively. (Mair 2007:27-30).

3.3 Which translation of the Art of War?

The *Art of War* first appeared in “the West” in 1772 as a “translation” (it is more like a summary with running commentary) by Father J.J.M. Amiot, one of the first Jesuits

in China (e.g. Griffith 1963:179). It first appeared in English in 1905 and was translated by Captain E. F. Calthrop, a British officer, while studying in Japan (Mair 2007:51). British translator and scholar Lionel Giles' 1910 English rendition (now public domain) of the *Art of War* was the English translation until its top spot was usurped by General Samuel Griffith's (1963) translation, which I consider a classic and a treasure trove of information. Other favorites of mine include: Professor John Minford's 2002 more poetically-inclined version and Sinologist Victor Mair's 2007 translation, which is the main one I use for this project. It has been voted the best translation by Sonshi.com. On top of the fact that it contains a remarkable essay comparing and contrasting Sun Zi and Carl von Clausewitz by international relations specialist and Chinese historian Arthur Waldron, state-of-the-art information, and compelling arguments of the *Art of War*'s authorship and dating, it is, at bottom, eminently readable.

3.4 *The Art of War: A chapter by chapter overview*

Here is a brief overview of the *Art of War*'s subject matter segueing into a synopsis of each chapter. Despite its brevity, the *Sun Zi bing fa* covers a lot of ground. For Sun Zi, war secures the state; this makes the strategist-general the state's protector. The strategist-general has knowledge of leadership, military organization, the weather, and terrain. More importantly, the strategist-general has self-knowledge and foreknowledge of the opposing generals, their armies, and so on through reconnaissance and the gathering of intelligence before battle. He compares his capabilities with those of his enemy; he calculates the probability of victory and plans accordingly. The strategist-general perceives the 'shape' of the enemy through the Clausewitzian 'fog of war' and distinguishes the real from the illusory. Furthermore, he is able to hide his own 'shape' while creating illusions of his own through the stealthy use of orthodox and unorthodox moves prior to and in the midst of battle. All of this is in the effort to catch the enemy by surprise. This is when the strategist-general's patience and vigilance pays off. Having mastered the art of timing, swift, decisive action, economical effort, and unstoppable momentum, he strikes the weakness of an unwary enemy with army's full force bringing about a total victory.

3.4.1 Chapter One: “(Initial) Assessments” 計

The *Art of War*³² begins, “Warfare is a great affair of the state. The field of life and death, the way of preservation and extinction. It cannot be left unexamined.” (Sun Zi translation Mair 2007:76). According to Griffith (1963:39), this is the first historical acknowledgment that war is not a “transitory aberration but a recurrent conscious act and therefore susceptible to rational analysis.” Sun Zi, thus, emphasizes the intellectual import of making sound calculations about the advantages and disadvantages of either waging or evading war. These calculations are based on the following five fundamentals: “the Way”, “Heaven”, “Earth”, “Generalship”, and “Method”. The Way is the moral legitimacy that unites a leader and the populace. Heaven concerns atmospheric and seasonal conditions in regards to military action, while earth concerns terrain in these regards. Generalship refers to the moral and intellectual faculties of the strategist-general which include: knowledge, trustworthiness, humaneness, bravery, and sternness in carrying out discipline of one’s officers and troops³³. Method refers to military organization, the chain of command, and logistical issues. By making comparisons of both sides one can devise a plan. From this follows Sun Zi’s illustrious maxim, “Warfare is a way of deception” (trans. Mair 2007:78). From his definition of warfare, Sun Zi then catalogs the following twelve stratagems that can be used to deceive one’s enemy: if capable, appear incapable; if active, appear inactive; if near, appear far and if far, appear near; if one’s opponents are greedy tempt them; if one’s opponents are in chaos, seize them; if one’s opponents are secure, prepare for them; if one’s opponents are strong, evade them; if one’s opponents are angry, aggravate them; if one’s opponents are humble, make them arrogant; if one’s opponents are at ease, make them weary; if one’s opponents are united, divide them (Mair 2007:78-79). Some of these ploys are designed for military purposes, others for political and diplomatic purposes, and still others for both, but the overall result is to catch the enemy ill-equipped and oblivious³⁴. Sun Zi ends the chapter by reemphasizing the making of calculations prior to battle in order to anticipate victory or defeat.

32 For the most part Mair’s (2007) translation is utilized, for example, in the chapter titles and chapter-specific terminology, but Griffith (1963) and Minford (2002) are also utilized where noted.

33 As Raphals (1992:105) points out, these virtues are the same as those of the Confucian “gentleman”.

34 “Attack them when they are unprepared; Come forth when they are not expecting you to do so” (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007).

3.4.2 Chapter Two: “Doing Battle” 作戰

The second chapter deals more overtly with political and economic ramifications of doing battle. It emphasizes that victory should be obtained in the shortest amount of time, with the least amount of effort, and with the least amount of casualties on both sides, for “[n]o nation has ever benefited from a protracted war” (Sun Zi trans. Minford 2002:8). A prolonged war depletes energy, morale, strength, and resources leaving one weakened from within where officers can mutiny and rival elites can rise up and from without where foes can rally. Ongoing war not only affects one’s army but one’s nation as well; the negative impact on the economy can impoverish the populace. Instead, an army should live off of the enemy; even prisoners of war should be treated kindly so that they may join the ranks and replenish one’s forces.

3.4.3 Chapter Three: “Planning for the Attack” 謀攻

Sun Zi says, “Causing the enemy forces to submit without a battle is the most excellent approach” (trans. Mair 2007:85). For the majority of scholars both western and Chinese, “winning without fighting” signifies the central theme of Sun Zi’s strategic thought and even Chinese strategic thought in general (Johnston 1995:99). Thus, for Sun Zi, taking a nation, an army, a regiment, a detachment, or a company intact is preferred over their destruction. In order for victory to occur in this manner, firstly, attack the enemy’s strategy, secondly, their alliances, thirdly, their armies, and, as a last resort, attack their cities. These verses seem to show Sun Zi’s preference for nonviolent strategies over violent ones. Some (Wu 2003:17) even claim that Sun Zi “wanted to fight against fight itself with brilliant non-fight tactics”; it is a “psychological warfare” that Sun Zi promotes. International relations specialist Alastair Johnston argues against these assumptions, accepted or otherwise, and does so quite convincingly, in my opinion. Without going through his entire argument, I touch on the key points. For him “winning without fighting” is *not* the central theme of the *Art of War*, the other *bing fa*, or Chinese strategic thought as a whole. Instead, he contends that the end goal is to “respond flexibly to the enemy and thus create conditions for victory”. (Johnston 1995:102). This idea is best exemplified in the concept of *quan bian* or the “responding to changing circumstances according to a weighing of all relevant factors in a strategic situation” which overrides any *a priori* preferences for nonviolent over violent strategies (ibid. n. 53). In the case of the *Art of War*

specifically, the purposes of chapters 4 through 13, which explicitly refer to principles dealing with attacking the enemy (never mind Sun Zi's opening statement), would be undermined if Sun Zi put any limits on what a strategist-general could do to achieve victory in order to ensure the survival of the state. As Johnston puts it, "[W]ar [is] a *process* of defeating the enemy" (ibid. 104). As such, Sun Zi's continuum from attacking an enemy's strategy to besieging a city is not a list of nonviolent to violent preferences but rather one of magnitude from least to most violent. The continuum is a series of options that a strategist-general could, ideally, follow in sequence—first *attack* their strategy, next *attack* their alliances, and so on. Johnston's interpretation is in accordance with the *quan bian*³⁵ principle as well as the relationship between deception as encapsulated in the twelve (mostly nonviolent) stratagems and the application of military power Sun Zi lays out in chapter 1. The overall notion is not necessarily nonviolence over violence, which would be ideal but unrealistic, but *minimal* violence relative to the situation (ibid. 102-105, see also Lord 2000:304 and Mair 2007:142, n. 4).

When it comes to tactics of offense, the size of one's army and one's rival's army is crucial in deciding what course of action to take. If one's forces are ten to one, surround them, if five to one, attack them, if two to one, divide them into two, if equally matched, fight, if fewer in number, be able to retreat, if much smaller in size, escape. Knowledge of these force ratios and how to utilize both large and small forces are two of the "five essentials" for the prediction of victory. The third relates to the solidarity of one's forces from the general down to the foot soldier. The fourth requires one to be ready for the unforeseen. The fifth requires that the general to be free from the sovereign's meddling. The chapter ends with a tool for decision-making. "Know the enemy, know myself and victory is never in doubt, not in a hundred battles" (Sun Zi trans. Minford 2002:17). If one does not know the enemy but knows oneself, then the win to loss ratio is 50/50. If one knows neither the enemy nor oneself, then failure is certain.

35 *Quan* refers to "[p]ower, expedient (assessment)—exerted by the commander in the field" (Mair 2007:xliv). It "is associated with change (*bian*) and with the use of crafty (*qi*), as opposed to straightforward (*zheng*) activity" (Raphals 1992:110; see also Mair 2007:xlili-xlv).

3.4.4 Chapter Four: “Positioning” 形

In this chapter Sun Zi draws attention to offense and defense. “Invincibility,” he says, “depends upon oneself; vincibility,” on the other hand, rests “depends upon the enemy” (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007:88). Invincibility concerns defense while vincibility concerns offense. Whereas defense implies deficiency, offense implies surplus. In other words, when an army lacks strength they should be on the defensive. When an army has an excess of strength they should be on the offensive. One can only prepare one’s own defenses and positioning in order to be undefeatable but must wait for the opportune time to strike the enemy, that is, when their defenses are low or their vulnerabilities show. The chapter ends with the “five steps” of planning. Measurement of space determines estimates which determines calculations which determines comparisons (see chapter 1 verses 11-13 for the exact questions a strategist-general should ask) which determines the chances of victory.

3.4.5 Chapter Five: “Configuration” 勢

When the enemy is caught unawares it is time for the strategist-general to put two different forces into effect. There is ordinary, orthodox, direct *zheng* force and there is extraordinary, unorthodox, indirect *qi* force, both of which are mutually causal. *Zheng* can become *qi* and *qi* can become *zheng*; “their permutations are inexhaustible” (Sun Zi, trans. Minford 2002:26). Both forces are needed, for “[i]n warfare, [one should] engage directly [and] secure victory indirectly” (ibid. 25). As Griffith (1963:42-43) points out these are not just tactics but can be employed at the strategic level as well. Sun Zi makes use of a variety of metaphors such as a swooping falcon, a drawn crossbow, and boulders rolling down a mountainside to describe the “potential energy” released by a well-timed strike. Caught unawares the enemy is taken away by the abrupt onrush of overwhelming force. Such a situation is the general’s alone to create.

3.4.6 Chapter Six: “Emptiness and Solidity” 虛實

A strategist-general can coax an enemy’s defenses down by “creating [forms] to confuse and delude the enemy” all the while “conceal[ing] his true dispositions and ultimate intent” (Griffith 1963:41), in other words, via stratagems. Stratagems generate the parameters within which an enemy must maneuver, thereby giving them a “form” through

“predictive, patterned behaviors” that the strategist-general can behold and control. At the same time, stratagems make one “formless” or camouflage one’s true form. (e.g. Johnston 995:97-98). While the deception of stratagems alone does not guarantee victory, it weakens the enemy so that one’s overall strategy remains unseen. “Subtle and insubstantial, the expert leaves no trace; divinely mysterious, he is inaudible. Thus he is a master of his enemy’s fate” (Sun Zi trans. Griffith 1963:97). Certain victory requires the increase in the density of the fog of uncertainty. In the end, all that is known of the strategy is that it worked.

3.4.7 Chapter Seven: “The Struggle of Armies” 軍爭

While much of how armies “struggle” is laid out in the first three chapters of the *Art of War* as Mair (2007:34) points out, some important ideas can be gleaned from chapter seven. For Sun Zi, maneuver during the heat of battle is the most challenging aspect of warfare. Because anything that can go wrong will go wrong, a strategist-general must become adept at “taking what is troublesome to be advantageous” (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007:100). To outwit one’s opponent utilize both direct and indirect approaches to “[m]ove when it is advantageous and create changes in the situation by dispersal and concentration of forces” (Sun Zi trans. Griffith 1963:106). This chapter also concerns other aspects of maneuver such as marching to the battlefield, communicating during battle to coordinate the troops, and logistics. The chapter ends with nine axioms of “the art of war”. These include: do not charge uphill, do not face an enemy with his back to a hill, do not fall for feigned flight, do not attack elite troops, do not swallow bait, do not prevent an army from returning home, do not totally surround an army but, rather, leave an escape route, and do not press an enemy at bay.

3.4.8 Chapter Eight: “Nine Varieties” 九變

It is unclear what the “nine varieties” actually refer to in the text. Instead of “nine varieties” there are actually three sets of five items each. The first set of five items emphasizes terrain because for Sun Zi “a general unable to use ground properly was unfit to command” (Griffith 1963:43). So, he advises if on “unfavorable” or low-lying terrain, do not encamp. If at a crossroads, join up with allies. If on “forsaken” terrain, do not linger. If on “surrounded terrain” be resourceful and make a plan. If on “desperate terrain”, fight.

The strategist-general knows where to fight and how to lure the enemy to the battlefield of his choosing. In the second set of five items, a strategist-general knows what *not* to do. He knows which roads *not* to take, which armies not to attack, which cities not to besiege, which terrain not to contest, and which of the ruler's orders to disobey. The third set concerns the "five fatal flaws" of a general's character. These include: recklessness which leads to destruction, cowardice which leads to capture, a short temper which is easily provoked, "incorruptibility" which is easy to shame, and a sympathy for his troops which can be harassed. These can only lead to ruination and death.

3.4.9 Chapter Nine: "Marching the Army" 行軍

According to Mair's dating, this is the first chapter written and is one of the four 'core' chapters (the others include chapters 8, 10, and 11) around which the rest revolve. Superior positioning and maintaining control of one's forces through superior leadership are at stake on the march. So Sun Zi provides means for how to observe the opposing army including several signs possible enemy trickery such as "[i]f he chooses to occupy a place that is easily accessible, it must be because he finds some advantage there" (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007:110). He also provides numerous indications for the condition of the enemy such as "if they see advantage but do not advance toward it, they are weary" (ibid. 111). An important point Sun Zi makes in this chapter is that "[i]n war, numbers alone confer no advantage" (trans. Griffith 1963:122). This principle is supported sociologically. Sociologist Randall Collins (2010) put together a model of his sociological theory of the dynamics of victory or defeat in battle that includes variables for material resources, morale, and randomness. When his model was simulated one of the outcomes was that "morale advantages manifest themselves early in the conflict, whereas material advantages are more influential as the conflict drags on" (Fletcher et al. 2011:252). A swift victory based on "morale advantage" is exactly what Sun Zi preaches here and throughout the *Art of War*. For Sun Zi, advantage of this kind begins with "mutual trust" between the general and his army (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007:112), which is to say he has the Way as seen in chapter 1.

3.4.10 Chapter Ten: “Terrain Types” 地形

In this chapter³⁶ Sun Zi once again returns to the significance of topography for tactical advantage. “Know heaven, know earth and your victory is complete” (Sun Zi, trans. Minford 2002:71). Sun Zi classifies terrain as follows: on “accessible” terrain both sides can come and go easily (having the high ground and secure supply lines is advantageous), on “hanging” terrain it is easy to advance but not to withdraw (only fight if the enemy is unprepared), on “branching” terrain both sides are at a disadvantage (lure, retreat, and attack when half of their army is out), on “narrow” terrain occupy it first, block the route, and wait (if they get there first do not follow them), on “precarious” terrain occupy it first, if they do, do not follow them (entice them out by retreating), and on “distant” terrain when strength is matched engagement is not advantageous. The “way of terrain” requires diligent study from the strategist-general and so does the “way of defeat”. The six ways of defeat are as follows: “put to flight”, when one army is ten times the size of the other, “lax”, when the troops are strong but the officers are weak, “depressed”, when officers are strong but troops are weak, “collapsed”, when high ranking officers charge into battle out of resentment for the general before calculations are made, “chaotic”, when the general is weak and there is no discipline, and “routed” when a general’s misjudges comparisons of strength and weaknesses and sends the wrong force out to meet the enemy. Perhaps, one could call these “types of morally-deficient terrain”.

3.4.11 Chapter Eleven: “Nine Types of Terrain” 九地

This chapter³⁷ seems to be a continuation of chapter eight on the “nine varieties”, as it follows it chronologically. Here Sun Zi classifies nine kinds of ground. “Dispersed” terrain is home turf; do not fight. “Easy” terrain is the penetration zone into the enemy’s territory frontier; do not stop. “Contested” terrain has advantages for both sides; do not attack. “Intersecting” terrain is easily accessible to all; do not block. When terrain is at the crossroads; form alliances. “Encumbered” terrain is deep into enemy territory; plunder them. “Unfavorable” terrain is difficult to march through such as mountains and forests; keep marching. “Surrounded” terrain is through narrow gorges putting one’s army in the

36 Besides the first quote, Mair’s (2007) translation is used for the terminology.

37 Here again, Mair’s (2007) translation is used for the terms unless otherwise noted.

position of being defeated by a much smaller army³⁸; devise stratagems. “Where without a desperate struggle I perish, that is death ground”; fight! (Sun Zi trans. Minford 2002:74). This is “desperate” terrain. The chapter ends with this advice, “If the enemy opens a door, rush in. Seize what he holds dear, and secretly contrive an encounter” (ibid. 87). Sun Zi’s ‘home invasion’ analogy (as rendered by Minford) seems to us to be the ideal outcome of being on “encumbered” terrain.

3.4.12 Chapter Twelve: “Incendiary Attack” 火攻

Burn men, burn supplies, burn equipment, burn warehouses, burn lines of communication—these are the *Sun Zi*’s targets for attacking with fire. By the end of the chapter the focus shifts to fire of an ‘emotional’ nature—anger and spite, which should never be the impetus for battle. Anger and spite can change into pleasure and joy, but the destroyed and the dead stay as they are.

3.4.13 Chapter Thirteen: “Using Spies” 用間

Griffith comments that Sun Zi’s chapter on “secret operations [is] as pertinent today as when he composed it” (1963:44). For Sun Zi information via “[f]oreknowledge³⁹ cannot be gotten from ghosts and spirits, nor can it be obtained from interpreting the symbols of things⁴⁰, nor can it be acquired through astrological verification.” Rather, it must be gained from people “on the ground” who know the dispositions of the enemy, in other words, spies (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007:129). There are five types of spies: local spies come from among the enemy’s populace, internal spies come from the enemy’s officials, double agents come from among the enemy’s spies, those spies who risk death are given false information to pass on to the enemy, and those spies who escape with their lives are those that bring back information. The chapter also covers how spies are hired and handled. According to the *Sun Zi*, an army cannot move without being fueled by the information intelligence gathering supplies. One criticism of Sun Zi’s typology comes from political scientists Niou and

38 It was on this type of ground where the Spartans lead by King Leonidas I held back a considerably larger Persian force at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC.

39 “Sun Tzu’s perhaps deepest insight is that he recognizes [that]...[secret] intelligence is always deception as well as knowledge, it is the struggle for the advantage of what is known, a game of covering and uncovering, information and disinformation...The important criterion here is not truth versus falsehood, but rather tactical effectiveness. It is always biased...and thus inherently bound to the side that uses it.” (Horn 2003:62-63).

40 For the ancient Chinese commentators of the *Art of War*, this can include: from analogies of past events to divinatory practices (see Griffith 1963:8; Mair 2007:161, n. 4).

Ordeshook. They argue that Sun Zi does not take “triple agents” into account, which are double agents that are really *still* under the employment of the enemy and are meant to feed false information to the strategist-general instead (Niou and Ordeshook 1994:172). Despite that criticism, while using game theory to interpret the *Art of War*, Niou and Ordeshook (1994) find that Sun Zi should be given credit with foreseeing many of the strategies found among game theory’s repertoire⁴¹.

Now I turn on my “sociological eye”, as sociologist Randall Collins (1998:3) calls it, for “[w]hatever we read with the sociological eye becomes a clue to the larger patterns of society, here or in the past”. In order to see the *Art of War* from a sociological perspective I turn to the late anthropologist Mary Douglas’ “Cultural Theory” as my primary heuristic device.

4 Cultural Theory

4.1 Douglasian cultural theory

4.1.1 From ‘grid-group analysis’

In 1970 Mary Douglas published a classic ethnography about African religions called *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. It is in this work that she introduced ‘grid-group analysis’, the centerpiece of what was later to be called ‘cultural theory’ (henceforth CT). In *Natural Symbols* the theoretical framework of the ‘grid-group’ was first used as an approach to correlating bodily (or natural) symbolism with cosmologies, or belief systems about the origin and development of the universe. Later in *Cultural Bias* (1978) the typology was used for analyzing forms of social control; as Douglas now understood them, cosmologies were coercive devices whose effectiveness depended on the socio-cultural milieu. What originally began as a classificatory scheme in *Natural Symbols* essentially developed into a “sociology of belief” (i.e. what one believes is shaped by one’s social reality) in *Cultural Bias* (e.g. Mamadouh 1999; Spickard 1989). In this paper, it is the latter variant of Douglas’ typology and its subsequent development into a complete

41 These include the ‘dominant’, ‘minmax’, and ‘mixed’ strategies but not the ‘equilibrium’ strategy (for more details see Niou and Ordeshook 1994).

explanatory theory by Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky (1990) (henceforth TEW) that I will be utilizing.

According to Douglas' grid-group analysis, an individual's options are restricted either by their group's judgments and/or by their positions in a society⁴² that are presided over by certain conventions to which an individual conforms. To analyze the 'cultures'⁴³ that emerge from these forms of social control requires the following two dimensions or axes: 'group', which lies on the horizontal axis, is "the experience of a bounded social unit" and 'grid', which lies on the vertical axis, "refers to rules that relate one person to others on an ego-centered basis" (Douglas 1970:viii). In other words, the group dimension represents the general border lines around a community separating 'us' from 'them'; it gauges the amount of control the group has over members' lives. Whilst the grid dimension represents the guidelines by which community members live; it gauges the amount of control a group's members are willing to accept. Both of these axes each lie on a continuum from 'strong' to 'weak'. Taken together, these two dimensions, grid and group, generate four conflicting but coexisting categories of social control within a particular population. While there are four fundamental modes of social organization, there are also a range of combinations, from transitional states to hybrid forms, between these extreme, 'ideal types'. The table below (Table 4.1) shows the basic grid-group diagram with the labels Douglas proposed before she passed away in 2007. These are the labels that I will also utilize in my study.

Table 4.1: The grid-group diagram (Adapted from Douglas 2007:2)

strong grid, weak group ISOLATE	strong group, strong grid POSITIONAL
weak grid, weak group INDIVIDUALIST	strong group, weak grid ENCLAVE

42 For the most part, in this section I use 'society', 'community', and 'group' synonymously unless otherwise specified in the context.

43 Also called 'rationalities', 'solidarities', 'ways of life', 'ways of organizing', 'social orders', 'political cultures', 'cultural types', or simply 'types' (Mamadouh 1999:396, 400)

On the two left quadrants of the typology, or ‘weak group’, people value individual interests over group priorities; thus, they are unburdened by group pressures to achieve certain goals or participate in certain activities. On the two right quadrants of the typology, or ‘strong group’, people are stanch in their allegiance to the group and value collective over individual interests. In the midpoint between the left and the right quadrants, social pressures are in a state of equilibrium, but the individual is in a state of vacillation—unable to choose sides.

On the top two quadrants of the typology, or ‘strong grid’, people are said to behave according to well-defined roles, regulations, and duties established and enforced by a centralized authority. On the bottom two quadrants of the typology, or ‘weak grid’, these social parameters of people’s behavior are less restricting and more implicit; here, authority is decentralized. At the topmost and bottommost extremes of the grid the demarcation between what is pure, clean, and sacred and what is impure, unclean, and profane is the most distinct. While in the midpoint between the top and bottom quadrants, individuals live in anomie and uncertainty about what is socially acceptable behavior. This summarizes the two continua (in arbitrary order)—group from weak to strong and grid from strong to weak. Now, I turn to how the grid and group dimensions interact with each other to generate the four main cultures labeled ‘isolate’⁴⁴, ‘individualist’⁴⁵, ‘enclave’⁴⁶, and ‘positional’⁴⁷.

In the upper right quadrant, or ‘strong group, strong grid’, is the positionist’s culture. This mode of social control is organized as a hierarchy⁴⁸ where all groups are contained within and covered by a larger group. People’s choices are constricted by both the leadership within their group *and* by their roles in society which are assigned according to their gender, lineage, ethnicity, or some other criteria. They are set onto tiers in a manner that coincides with their traditions and by their utility to society as a whole. This high level

44 Also known as ‘fatalism’, ‘fatalist(s)’, ‘fatalistic’, ‘insulated’, or ‘atomized subordination’

45 Also known as ‘individualism’, ‘individualistic’, ‘competition’, or ‘entrepreneurs’

46 Also known as ‘egalitarianism’, ‘egalitarian(s)’, ‘factionalism’, ‘sect/sectarian’, ‘dissenting groups’, ‘communard(s)’, ‘egalitarian enclaves’, or ‘enclave(s)’

47 Also known as ‘hierarchist(s)’, ‘hierarchies’, ‘hierarchical’, ‘hierarchical collectivism’, or ‘positional’ (see Mamadouh, 1999 for a list of references to where these particular labels were used). For the sake of lexical symmetry, I re-label ‘enclave’ as ‘enclavist’ and ‘positional’ as ‘positionist’ but will use them interchangeably as the opportunity presents itself. I do not re-label ‘isolate’ as ‘isolationist’ because to be an isolationist one must have the power to choose the political stance of not becoming involved in other groups’ affairs. Isolates, as I will see, do not have that opportunity to choose.

48 At this juncture, the form of government is irrelevant; it could be authoritarian or democratic or some hybrid form.

of classification is used to coordinate interpersonal, intergroup, and supra-group action and also to resolve internal conflicts via a number of strategies including “upgrading, shifting sideways, downgrading, resegregating, [and] redefining” (Douglas 1978:206-207, quoted in Thompson et al. 1990:6). Overall, members of the positional society are culturally biased toward the traditional, the orderly, the symmetrical, and the logical which, for them, represent harmony. They prize loyalty, and, so much so, that status and justice are intertwined⁴⁹. At its most extreme point on the quadrant, the leadership is inaccessible and dominates from a distance. In place of persons, they exert social control through objects (e.g. traffic lights, drones, etc.). Analogically, even their cosmos is hierarchically-ordered. Types of positional cultures include bureaucracies, corporations, and the military.

In the bottom right quadrant, or ‘strong group, weak grid’, is the enclavist’s culture. This kind of society is also characterized by its intense sense of community, but there are no tiers as in the positionist culture. Enclavists’ moral sense causes them to reject the inequalities of mainstream society. Instead, an enclave is an egalitarian mode of social control, as paradoxical as it may sound. Here, social control arises from the enclavist’s black-and-white worldview where outsiders are stigmatized and, even, ‘damned’, as in the case of some religious sects. It is this way of seeing the world and all of its subsequent outward symbols like dress code, dietary restrictions, and so on that reinforces it sharpening group boundaries and maintaining group membership. This lifestyle can also attract the disillusioned from among other types of communities. The preference for equality, though, makes leadership, decision-making, and resolving internal disputes a challenge. The enclavist has a strong tendency towards dogmatism which is used to his or her advantage within the community, for the doctrinally pure can claim to speak on behalf of the group and exercise control over his or her fellow members. Deep-seated disagreements can lead to factions secretly maneuvering to secure power or outright schisms where rival enclaves are formed. Acts of aggression from an external threat, though, increase the group’s social solidarity exponentially making internal dissent and factionalism look petty in comparison

49 Sociologist Donald Black’s (1976) masterwork *Behavior of Law* is superlative in this regard. Amongst other things, he demonstrates that in the U.S. legal system (a hierarchy) the greater the statuses differ between the perpetrator and the victim, the harsher the punishment, especially if the contestation of that status is explicitly involved.

(Douglas and Mars 2003). Types of enclavist cultures range from trade unions to medieval monastic, military orders.

In the lower left quadrant, or ‘weak group, weak grid’, is the individualist’s culture which takes the form of a free market. People are not restricted by group nor by their social roles; instead, social control is a product of competition. Everyone can compete; although, those with the most advantage are, unsurprisingly, the most dominant. According to Douglas, the merit-based, individualist culture “is in principle an egalitarian society, but as it defers to wealth and power it fails to realise its egalitarian ideals” (2007:6). As a matter of fact, in this kind of society the further one is from these ideals the more success one will have. Part of this success includes having control over others even unto developing a cult-like following. By and large, the individualist is primarily concerned with maximizing his or her own gains and minimizing losses. Here, I find the quintessential capitalist or the management guru. In Weberian terms these three cultures, the positionist, enclavist, and individualist, are known as ‘bureaucracy’, (religious) ‘charisma’, and ‘market’, respectively (ibid. 3). The last type in my diagram is one which Weber neglected to theorize about. While not neglected, it is the least theorized by cultural theorists including Douglas (e.g. Douglas and Mars 2003:769) herself because, of the four quadrants, they are the least participative in the political landscape.

In the upper left quadrant, or ‘weak group, strong grid’, is the isolate’s culture, so named because they are the culturally isolated; the further to the left of the quadrant they are the more alone. Discarded from the positionist, enclavist, and individualist cultures, they “attract no attention, no one asks for their opinion or takes them seriously in argument”, and because of this they are perceived as being apathetic (ibid. 6). Despite this benign neglect by public policy, they are still ruled, albeit remotely (for instance, by the leadership of a hierarchy). Thus, power, for the isolate, is unattainable, for it resides elsewhere. This is not just in the political sense but, by analogy, in the cosmic sense as well. Their cultural bias is fatalist. For them, there is no amount of rational calculation, no amount of cooperation, and no amount of individual skill that can control or even minimize the amount of uncertainty in any set of circumstances; fate overtakes us all. Some people might willingly go to this kind of community to evade the social responsibilities in and collective pressures of their own communities, but, for the most part, this is the domain of

the captive (prisoners, sweatshop workers, and so on) and the destitute. (Douglas 1970; Douglas 1999; Douglas 2007; Thompson et al. 1990).

From each cultural vantage point, the worldviews of the others seem irrational, but if a culture was irrational then, by definition, it would not be feasible. According to grid-group analysis, *all* four cultures are rational. When an individual uses his or her cultural bias to justify his or her social relations that, in turn, substantiate the expectations raised by the cultural bias, it is considered rational behavior (Mamadouh 1999:397). If there are plural ‘rationalities’ then there is more than one ‘rational choice’ depending on the cultural context. Individuals can even replace one ‘rationality’ for another by their own volition, (abstractly) moving from one quadrant in the grid-group diagram to the next. Of course, they can also *be moved* from one quadrant to the next (for example, a high-powered financier can suddenly find him- or herself completely bankrupt, going from being an individualist to being an isolate); this does not make it sociologically deterministic, though. While grid-group analysis strongly emphasizes the effect of a society’s organization on its members, individual freedom is not denied; it is just bounded. This is a phenomenologically sound assessment as well. Anyone who reflects on his or her own decision-making process understands that the freedom to choose is not absolute. The quality and/or quantity of one’s choices are limited by his or her context, social or otherwise. Moreover, the very freedom to choose may even be limited, for example, if a decision also requires another’s consent. Despite an individual’s capacity to change cultures or rationalities, the grid-group typology, in its original form, was too static and did not properly explain how or why such change occurred (Douglas 1999:412; Douglas 2007:6; Thompson et al. 1990; see, Mamadouh 1999 for a fascinating chronology of how the grid-group typology has evolved throughout the years).

What was so groundbreaking about grid-group analysis, though, was Douglas’ addition of the enclavist and the isolate to the well-known social groupings of the time—the hierarchy (or positionist) and the free market (or individualist). These two dimensions conceptually doubled the usual dichotomy employed by social scientists then (and even now) widening the theoretical purview of those so interested. Another appealing feature of the grid-group typology is that it was not derived inductively from Douglas’ ethnographic observations, for doing so creates a propensity for producing classifications with categories

from differing criteria. This could lead to the categories not being mutually exclusive whereby some objects under study can fit into more than one category or jointly exhaustive whereby some objects under study may not fit into any categories at all. The grid-group typology is both mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive; it is a logically coherent system. (Thompson et al. 1990:13-14). I would also add that besides being logically coherent, grid-group analysis also has “explanatory coherence” (even if it is not the explanatory powerhouse that it becomes in CT). As described by cognitive scientist and philosopher Paul Thagard (1992) explanatory coherence has the following three criteria: consilience, simplicity, and analogy. Consilience means that it has explanatory range; it is able to explain more facts than competing. More specifically, there are two types of consilience that can be described as being ‘static’ or ‘dynamic’. When a theory can be used to evaluate all available information at the time of its inception then it is said to have “static consilience”. When a theory can explain more than it did when it was first formulated then it is said to have “dynamic consilience”. (Thagard 1992). Not only does grid-group theory have overall explanatory breadth, it has both types of consilience as well as I shall hope to show in the next section. Principally, though, it is grid-group analysis’ two additional types, the enclavist and the isolate, which have all but assured that this is the case (Thompson et al. 1990:103-104). Grid-group typology also meets the second criteria of simplicity or parsimony, which places limits on consilience, because it was not ad hoc; there are no special or superfluous categories. Lastly, the criteria of analogy, or how well the theory corresponds to other theories that social scientists find convincing (Thagard 1992), is fulfilled by grid-group analysis’ debt to the past “masters” of sociological thought, the mastery and further development of their ideas, and the further development of Mary Douglas,⁵⁰ own.

As we have seen above, Max Weber’s three forms of rationality correspond to three of the four cultures. Sociologically, though, it is Emile Durkheim who has had the greatest impact on Mary Douglas’s work related to grid-group analysis and to the more significant modifications made to it in the form of CT by anthropologist Michael Thompson and political scientist Aaron Wildavsky with help from Richard Ellis (Thompson et al. 1990). Durkheim made revealing the social basis for how individuals perceive reality and its inner

50 In my academic opinion, she was a master of sociological thought in her own right.

workings his lifelong project (ibid. 140). According to TEW, for him, individuals internalize the order of their society, including its specific perception of the world, through their social interactions with others. This is the only way that people would be able to share the classifications, such as ‘space’ and ‘time’, which make up how they perceive reality. These inventions that individuals have cooperatively wrought not only sustain the social interactions from which they came, but they also take on a life of their own. They are both within the individuals and outside of them as highly influential but taken for granted, social institutions. (ibid. 129-141). Besides Durkheim and Weber, other sociological thinkers that have an influence, in one way or another, on TEW’s extension of CT include Montesquieu, Comte, Spencer, Marx, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Parsons, Merton, Stinchcombe, and Elster. In this next section we shall see how Douglas’ grid-group analysis developed into the more dynamic cultural theory⁵¹ of Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky.

4.1.2 To ‘cultural theory’

Up until now I have been using ‘culture’, a very problematic term in the social sciences, without defining it. Following TEW, culture can be described as a “way of life” that is made up of a “viable” arrangement of “social relations” and “cultural bias”. Social relations are “patterns of interpersonal relations” while cultural bias⁵² deals with “shared values and beliefs” (Thompson et al. 1990:1). For a way of life to continue on viably it must instill the cultural bias, through social relations, that provides justifications⁵³ or ‘certainties’ for it in the members of that community. This does not mean that social relations determine cultural bias or vice versa. Rather, they are interconnected and mutually causal⁵⁴ as I described in the section above. For a set of social relations and cultural bias to be able to reciprocally reinforce each other, they must be compatible (TEW’s

51 Cultural Theory is short for the ‘Theory of Sociocultural Viability’.

52 This is similar to ‘worldview’ (from the German *Weltanschauung* which means ‘a view of the world’). In general, cultural anthropologists, philosophers, psychologists, and religious studies scholars agree that a worldview is a way of thinking about and interpreting the world (Johnson, Hill, and Cohen 2011:143). While some scholars believe that there can be individual and group worldviews (refer to Johnson et al. 2011 for more information), extending the logic of CT, an individual could not have a ‘private’ cognitive bias because bias of any kind is not only embedded in but also embedded by a socio-cultural context.

53 Explicit justifications also act as implicit criticisms of an opposing argument as rhetoricians and social psychologists have demonstrated (e.g. Billig [1987]1996; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca [1958]1971). In the case above, the ‘opposing argument’ represents a competing way of life.

54 For TEW, CT is not designed to get at the origins of ways of life but to understand how these primary cultural forms, after having come about, endure and transform (Thompson et al. 1990:1).

“compatibility condition”, *ibid.* 2). It is not only a way of life that indoctrinates individuals, for if members of a community want to live a certain way they must settle on those values and beliefs (i.e., the cultural bias) that can sustain that way of life (*ibid.*). Individuals indoctrinate each other and, by choosing which set of doctrines to abide by, indoctrinate themselves. Regardless of the means by which a cultural bias is propagated, the bias of one culture must be defined against the bias of its antagonist culture in order for its members “to know who they are and what they stand for” (Douglas 1999:413). In addition, because of its specific shortcomings a way of life requires the other ways of life to continuously amend it. One way they do this is by making and breaking alliances with each other (Thompson et al. 1990:86-93). To put it succinctly, they all need each other. This is TEW’s “requisite variety condition” (*ibid.* 4). This leads us to TEW’s “impossibility theorem” that states that there are only five⁵⁵ ways of life (a fifth one found in the very center of the grid-group diagram that will be discussed later), no more and no less (*ibid.* 3). Hence, for TEW the five ways of life must always be present in any society. While the four ways of life vie for or attempt to maintain their dominance relative to each, the fifth way of life retreats from the power struggles. The continuous conflict between the cultures creates a state of “permanent dynamic imbalance”. That is, a state that is stable through change, which keeps them from becoming too rigid and totally shattering when faced with the aggregate effect of all manners of uncertainty and adversity. (See Thompson et al. 1990:83–100 for the variety of ways this comes about). As Douglas (1999:413; 2007:8) acknowledged, this competition between the ways of life is one of the main advances that has helped introduce the much needed element of dynamism into her theory. In my understanding one of the other main advances to Douglas’ grid-group analysis is TEW’s explanation for how and why change comes about in a society. They do this via their “theory of surprise”, which is composed of three axioms.

The first axiom is that “[a]n event is never surprising in itself”. The second axiom is that “[i]t is potentially surprising only in relation to a particular set of convictions about how the world is.” The third axiom is that “[i]t is actually surprising only if it is noticed by the holder of that particular set of convictions.” (Thompson et al. 1990:70). In other words,

⁵⁵ I am in agreement with Mary Douglas (and Nowacki) that CT’s five ways of life should be seen as a useful analytical tool rather than the only feasible possibility (Nowacki 2004:342).

‘surprise’ is socially constructed⁵⁶. TEW also present a “typology of surprises” as seen below (Table 4.2). Each myth is understood according to what it is not, in other words, the other rival myths.

Table 4.2: A typology of surprises (After Thompson et al. 1990:71)

Actual world Stipulated world	I Capricious	II Ephemeral	III Benign	IV Perverse/ Tolerant
I Capricious (Isolate’s myth)		Expected windfalls don’t happen	Unexpected runs of good luck	Unexpected runs of good luck and bad luck
II Ephemeral (Enclavist’s myth)	Caution does not work		Others prosper	Others prosper
III Benign (Individualist’s myth)	Skill is not rewarded	Total collapse		Partial collapse
IV Perverse/ Tolerant (Positionist’s myth)	Unpredictability	Total collapse	Competition	

TEW argue that people try to rationalize those ideas or events that do not fit the expectations of their own way of life; this makes ways of life quite conservative, resilient to novelty and change. Eventually, though, a continuous barrage of surprises, or “the cumulative mismatches between expectation and result”, will initiate a rupture that requires a serious change to be made (Thompson et al. 1990:80). This coming apart of a culture can occur at the level of individuals whereby they migrate to another way of life that offers a better explanation for a surprising event. It can also occur at the level of the culture itself.

⁵⁶ Of course, there is the “startle response”, a physiological reaction to sudden stimuli like a loud noise or quick movement, which is related to the emotion that we, in lay terms, call ‘surprise’. Individually this reaction might lead to various responses. (Lang, Bradley, and Cuthbert 1990). I argue, in line with CT, that these responses are socioculturally conditioned.

When the latter happens, one way of life, being wholly rejected by its onetime adherents, will convert into the opposing way of life⁵⁷. (ibid. 69–81). An example of an extreme changeover could be the French Revolution. Put simply, before the revolution the French lived in a rigid hierarchy whose tiers were represented by the 'estates' with the monarchy sitting atop the highest estate (a positionist way of life). The revolutionaries wanted to abolish the estate system for a more communal system (an enclavist way of life). The bloodthirsty among them did so under the gleam of the guillotine. Most changeovers need not occur so violently, though; the 'revolutions' (e.g. the 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia, the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine, and perhaps the 'Arab Spring' in Egypt) of the 21st century are case in point⁵⁸.

These propositions—the compatibility condition, the impossibility theorem, requisite variety condition, and the theory of surprise—further develop the “explanatory coherence”, in Thagard’s words, of Douglas’ grid-group analysis. While CT is not without its controversies, it makes for a powerful explanatory theory. Grid-group analysis/CT has been applied by diverse disciplines besides anthropology, sociology, and political science to study a litany of concepts, politics, policies, and so on (see e.g. Mamadouh 1999 and Verweij et al. 2011 for some of the ways CT has been put to use). Even so, my plan is to employ CT as a heuristic device the way Mary Douglas originally designed grid-group analysis to function (e.g. Douglas 1978; Mamadouh 1999:396).

Before we go into TEW’s elaboration of the grid-group, let us briefly reiterate some main points. CT not only tries to explain how people attempt to achieve their goals but also why they prefer what they prefer (as TEW contend, this separates CT from other social scientific theories⁵⁹ of this sort). They go about this by asserting that in order to give meaning to their lives in an uncertain world people arrange themselves into five types of social organization, which are upheld by particular patterns and processes, to make meaningfulness possible. “[A]s people organize so they will behave” (ibid. 97, italics in

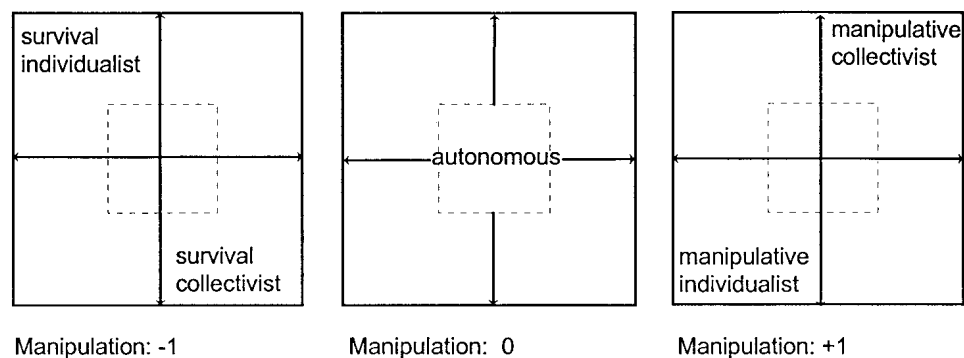
57 This reminds me of the symbol of the Taodejing (道德經) or the yin-yang made up of opposites (black-white) that do not oppose but rather complement each other as a mutual whole. When one side reaches its extreme, it flips becoming its reverse. (e.g. Combs 2000).

58 Although it could be argued that in many of the cases violence of some sort related to the revolutions occurred after the fact. The Russo-Georgian war of 2008 and current clashes between Muslims and Christians in Egypt are two instances.

59 It is also a better predictor of people’s preferences and biases than other alternatives (Verweij et al. 2011:476)

original). These social organizations are analyzed using the two dimensions of Douglas' typology, grid and group. The grid dimension refers to the extent of the rules. The group dimension refers to how tightly the group is integrated. Thompson (1982), one of the collaborators on CT, added a third dimension he called "grip", which refers to the amount of manipulation (or as Douglas puts it, the "dimension of power" 2007:8) involved in each quadrant. In CT this third dimension does not add any new cultural configurations and is implicitly included in the theory so I will only discuss it briefly and use it to segue into a short introduction of the fifth, and possible sixth, ways of life. Table 4.3 below portrays Thompson's three dimensional model.

Table 4.3: The third dimension of the grid-group diagram: 'Grip' or manipulation (Source: Mamadouh 1999:401 after Thompson 1982)



Starting from the leftmost square, the top left quadrant that Thompson labels "survival individualist" is where the isolate goes while in the bottom right quadrant that he labels "survival collectivist" is where the enclavist goes. Their level of manipulation is -1 which simply means that instead of manipulating they are manipulated; they use an individualist or collectivist strategy to 'survive'. If I shift my attention to the rightmost square, I can see that the top right quadrant is labeled "manipulative collectivist" which is where the positionist goes; positionists manipulate by prescribing more rules. While the bottom left quadrant is labeled "manipulative individualist" which is where the individualist goes; individualists manipulate by building a network in which they are the central node. The labels make it obvious what these two cultures' *modus operandi* is in this dimension. Taken together, manipulation can be used as a means to ensure that one

exchanges or does not exchange one culture for another. The fifth culture is not manipulated nor does it want to manipulate so has a manipulation “score” of zero. These people are the truly autonomous; thus, this way of life is labeled “autonomy” (which I re-label as “autonomist” for lexical continuity).

Autonomists abide in the very midpoint of all four quadrants. Having retreated from all four ways of life, they are free from both group demands and behavioral regulations. Because of this they must improvise everything, but they are satisfied living off the land. The recluse is an example of this fifth way of life (Douglas 2007:8; Thompson et al. 1990).

Some (e.g. Nowacki 2004) have argued for a sixth “philosophical” way of life in contradistinction to CT’s “impossibility theorem” that posits that there are only five possible ways of life. Sociologically akin to the autonomist but “socially engaged”, the philosopher’s way of life employs a “[c]ritical rationality...that it is willing to put *all* of its principles and presuppositions into question” in order to attain truth including his or her view of nature, which the autonomist is unwilling to do (ibid. 337 italics in original). This is a reflective social being that is outside the four quadrants altogether because it cannot be reduced to them yet can ruminate on CT as a whole. (Nowacki 2004). Accordingly, that could place all of those individuals that are able to write about CT in the theoretical section of their master’s theses, for example, into this wisdom-seeking way of life. Nevertheless, the ability to philosophize on occasion does not make one a philosopher.

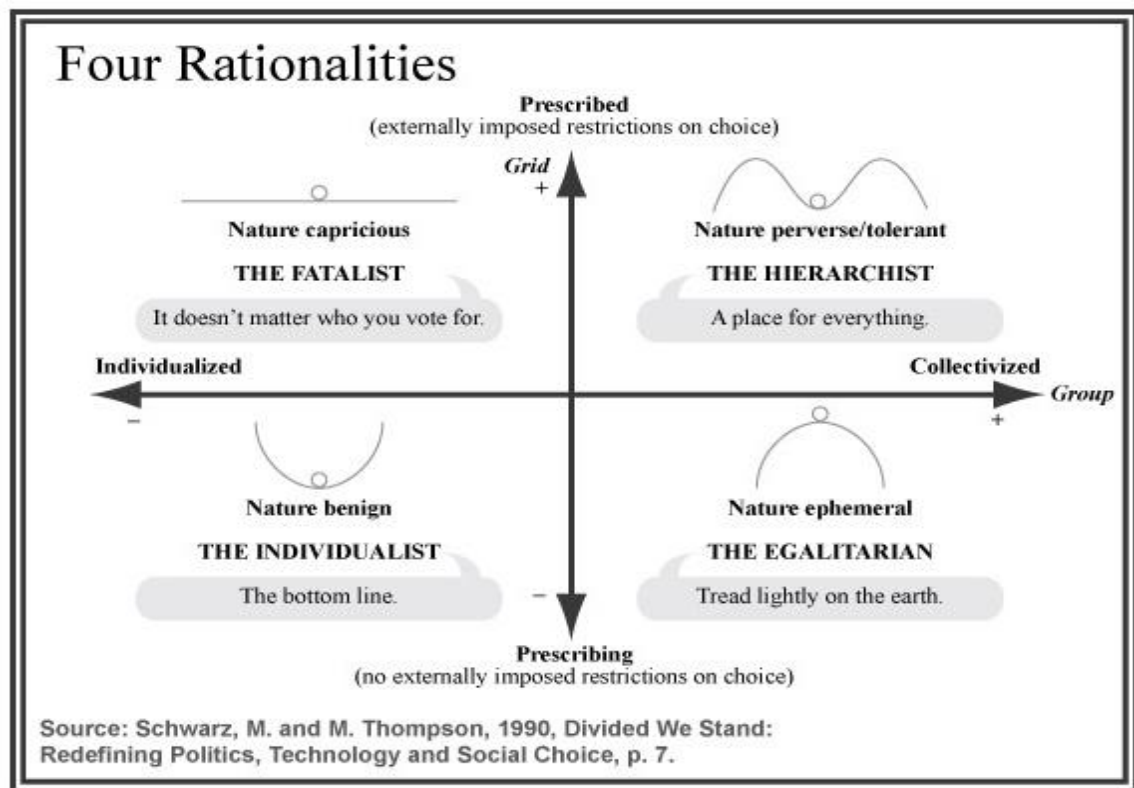
This brings us to CT’s assumption that people have “multiple selves”. Basically, it means that because their social context is not consistent (one might be an individualist at work, a positionist at home, an enclavist at church, and an isolate when one cheers for a sports team that is known for losing) people must make ‘coalitions’ within themselves of these various ways of life in which they repeatedly come in contact. The same thing must also occur in society as a whole in order to function smoothly. In this way, individuals are “self-contained regime[s]”. (Thompson et al. 1990:265–67). Once again, this idea has a very Durkheimian flavor who, in Mary Douglas’ words, thought of the “individual mind furnished as society writ small” (1986:45). If what TEW, Douglas, and Durkheim say is so

then, the ways of life and their relationships to each other should appear ‘fractally’⁶⁰ at every level of observation whether at the ‘macro’ level of the whole system or the ‘micro’ level of an individual’s mind or the ‘meso’ level of anything in between, for no matter what level one looks at it will look ‘self-similar’, in other words, the same from near as from far. From society to the individual mind, everything is structured by the social, the cultural. Even nature and, by extension, human nature are not perceived how they really are but rather through the lens of one’s cultural bias; that is, they are socially constructed.

4.1.2.1 The sociocultural construction of nature and human nature

Below is the well-known diagram of the four “myths of nature” nested in the grid-group typology that has become a mainstay of CT (e.g. Mamadouh 1999:403).

Table 4.4: The four rationalities and the myths of nature



⁶⁰ For the use of fractals as heuristic devices in the social sciences see Abbott’s (2004) *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. For the use of fractals to describe the nature of the social sciences see Abbott’s (2000) *The Chaos of Disciplines*.

The myths of nature are “partial representations of reality” because they “capture some essence of experience and wisdom”. Still, they act “as self-evident truth to the particular social being whose way of life is premised on nature conforming to that version of reality”. In this way, the myths are both true and false which has allowed them to stand the test of time. (Thompson et al. 1990:26). As expected, there are five myths, though only four are shown in the chart above. The diagram represents the relationship between individual or group life represented as the ball in the natural world depicted as a landscape of curved, straight, or wavy lines.

Working my way clockwise, I begin with the upper right hand corner labeled ‘the hierarchist’ (or positionist). They see nature as ‘perverse/tolerant’ meaning that it can cope with most events; the shape of the ‘hills’ will ensure that the ball will return to the ‘valley’ where it is in equilibrium. Still, it is susceptible to sporadic events that can send the ball over the edge into chaos. In order to be able to predict when these events can occur and manage them, experts should be given the authority they need to keep us out of harm's way, or so the cultural bias goes. In the lower right hand corner labeled ‘the egalitarian’ (or enclavist) are those that see nature as ‘ephemeral’. Here, nature is fragile and should be treated with the utmost care, for any perturbation might send the ball over the hill, the ecosystem into a catastrophic collapse. This myth justifies the use of sanctions to curb behavior destructive to nature and encourages us all to live in kibbutzim. Adjacent to this quadrant is the individualist who sees nature as ‘benign’. Nature is durable in that it can take all manners of shocking events; for them the ball will always roll to the bottom where it belongs. This myth justifies their trial and error experimentation and even a level of laxity in how they behave in the natural environment otherwise. Above this quadrant, in the upper left hand corner labeled ‘the fatalist’ (or isolate) people see nature as ‘capricious’. Theirs is a world filled with randomness. All they can do is cope to the best of their abilities when unpredictable events occur, but whether they die, survive, or thrive is the luck of the draw. It does not matter which way the balls goes on the landscape; it is all the same to the isolate. Finally, the autonomist, in the center of the diagram, views nature as ‘resilient’. For them there is no distinction between the ball and the landscape, life and the world, humanity and nature; there is no duality only ‘oneness’ with the natural world that provides their sustenance. Theirs is a ‘meta-myth’, for it envelops the other four myths each of

which are viewed as a phase in a never-ending cycle of change. By withdrawing from the social world and its constant power struggles, autonomists believe they can “transcend the other ways of life” but, in actuality, all they do is “bias themselves away from them” (Thompson et al. 1990:32). The four other myths must be reflected on in order to rationally choose the autonomist way of life, thus enacting their cultural bias. (ibid. 26-33). Mary Douglas (1996:88-89) developed human nature analogs based on the myths of nature. Her labels⁶¹ are a bit different from Thompson and his colleagues’, but they are consistent and cohere to CT.

For positionists, humans are “born sinful but can be redeemed by good institutions” (Thompson et al. 1990:35). For enclavists, humans are “basically good but [their] nature is highly susceptible to institutional influences” (ibid. 36). For individualists, humans do not change; they are and always will be self-seeking. While, for isolates, humans are so changeable that they should be looked upon with suspicion. In a way, this justifies their exclusion from the other ways of life. For the autonomist, withdrawal from the ‘human natures’ is of the essence, leaving behind the desires that stimulate the individuals in the other ways of life. (Thompson et al. 1990:33-37). Both nature and human nature, or rather the perception of nature and human nature, are socially constructed, according to CT. The different cultural biases get at a truth about each of them, but even if I take all five types of biases as a whole I can never get to the Truth about nature and human nature.

All there is, then, is the belief about what is true. These are not just any beliefs, however; they do not appear *ex nihilo* from within the mind of an individual but, rather, are grounded, as should be expected from a sociological perspective, in one’s social context⁶². For Douglas, the knowledge that I acquire is deep-rooted in my culture; hers is a “sociological epistemology”, a way of trying to understand the nature of knowledge that is situated in the social. “[I]ndividuals really do share their thoughts and they do to some extent harmonize their preferences, and they have no other way to make the big decisions [about life and death] except within the scope of [the ways of life in which they dwell, the]

61 For her ‘nature/person robust within limits’ represents the positionist, ‘nature/person nature fragile’ or ‘nature under duress’ represents the enclavist, ‘nature/person robust’ represents the individualist, and ‘nature/person unpredictable’ represents the isolate (Douglas 1996:88-89; Mamadouh 1999:403).

62 For TEW this is a “constrained relativism”, a middle ground between “realists” and “relativists” (Thompson et al. 1990:25).

institutions they build” (Douglas 1986:128). This, for her, is how institutions ‘think’. But what do they think about? In a word, control.

4.1.3 Information control systems

Institutions, as parts of a way of life or a whole way of life itself, can be described as “information control systems”. In other words, systems enact social control via the control of information⁶³. According to Douglas and Mars (2003), before people can communicate information it must go through a systemic process. It must first be designated as information from background noise. Next, the degree of dependability, the trustworthiness of the source, for example, must be deliberated on. Following this, people must incorporate the new information as meaningful “patterns that best seem to serve their purposes” into an already existing knowledge base⁶⁴ (ibid. 765). It is through this process that “people create the institutions they live in...burrowing into a mountain of noise”. (ibid. 765-766). Our environment (or life or reality or however one wants to put it) is so utterly complex that we can only have incomplete information about it. In order to make some sense of it based on this incomplete information, people form ways of life or institutions that give meaning to it though the rest remains ‘noise’. Following the ‘burrow’ metaphor, Douglas and her colleague Mars re-describe three of the four ways of life as animal domiciles, the shapes of which depict how they are organized socially.

They begin by comparing isolates to hares because hares are solitary creatures that do not burrow (unlike their cousins, the rabbits). They live their lives out in the open. While this may sound more like an autonomist who has decided to live *on* the slope of the

63 From the perspective of Claude E. Shannon’s ‘information theory’, information can be delineated from its indeterminate surroundings (background noise such as interference and static) as some ratio of signal to noise and compressed to reduce complexity all the while approximating the message as closely as possible *mathematically*. This was to be done by adjusting patterns of redundancy and frequency based on statistical findings in order to adapt a signal so that it stands out maximally against noise during transmission. Before information can even be sent, though, a channel of some sorts needs to be cleared to make contact with the receiver and maintain it; it is a *physical* process. This is the minimal state of communication. According to Shannon’s theory, then, communication consists of structural and material issues not semiotic and meaning-based ones⁶³. (e.g. Terranova 2004). Cyberneticians also agree that any time information is communicated it is an attempt at control over the perturbations of an unstable *physical* environment (e.g. Terranova 2004:69). This is the other side of the coin, so to speak.

64 An excellent theory for attempting to understand this phenomenon is social psychologist Serge Moscovici’s (e.g. 2000) “theory of social representations” which proposes how a novel and unfamiliar concept (e.g. ‘the butterfly effect’) or event (e.g. the formation of the European Union) is transformed into familiar, conventional knowledge.

‘mountain of noise’ rather than *in* it, the metaphor is supposed to capture that they do not ‘dig out’ their own burrows. In terms of information, what isolates receive is regulated from afar. For them, little information is shared because members of this kind of community rarely relate to each other. Because little of it is shared, it is not substantiated nor synchronized with what others’ know. Thus, they are limited in their ability to form institutions of their own.

Individualists (here called ‘opportunists’) are compared to rabbits but a kind who continually reconstruct their warren, a network of burrows that branch out from a center. This center is where information is concentrated. As I mentioned before, a dominant (i.e. successful) individualist is one that can gather other individuals around him or her. As a source of information, a center is created around them. In the constant contests for dominance, ‘superstars’ rise and fall, centers develop and expand or deteriorate and contract. Information is free to create, to share, and to receive so anyone can make an attempt at ‘superstardom’. Still, there must be some intersubjective agreement for the information to be considered acceptable. For the most part, the superstar’s word is ‘gospel’. If a superstar decides to consolidate power into something more formal then this kind of social organization can be combined with a hierarchy or even an enclave but each at different levels of the organization.

Positionists (here called ‘hierarchies’) are compared to ants as they are highly coordinated. Each sector within the anthill accommodates a specific class (the queen, the soldiers, the workers, and so on) and passageways between these sectors are clearly marked. In terms of information control, not every sector is accessible to everyone; security protocols are always in effect. Instead, information is allotted according to the roles one occupies in society. Furthermore, the flow of unconventional information coming from within is impeded while unfamiliar information coming from outside is screened. Because censorship is high and secrecy is enforced, ambiguity is low; one receives just enough information to fulfill one’s function in society. For those that resist this structure, punishment is doled out by barring the resistant from the information that they require for their livelihood or to move up-tier.

Enclavists (here called ‘enclaves’) are not compared to any animal’s domicile⁶⁵ and their subsequent social organization⁶⁶. In any case, as an information control system, the enclave protects itself from external sources of information, even with an authoritarian-style censorship if need be. Unlike the positionist’s hierarchy, the lack of well-defined roles means that informational ambiguity is high, despite the strong censorship. Once information from outside is filtered, as it inevitably must be to prevent ‘contamination’, the individuals within the enclave contend over its proper interpretation. Factions can then form, many times clandestinely, around those with the ‘correct’ interpretation. At the level of information-generation (or internal sources of information) secrecy can also be used as a tool of control (and faction-creation) separating those that know the secret(s) or aspects of the secret(s) from those that do not. (Douglas and Mars 2003:766-769). Below (Table 4.5) is the grid-group with information as its focus.

Table 4.5: A cultural theory of information (After Douglas and Mars 2003)

<p>strong grid, weak group</p> <p>ISOLATES Individuals insulated Information regulated from afar Little information distributed, verified, coordinated</p>	<p>strong group, strong grid</p> <p>POSITIONISTS Roles prescribed Information censored, partitioned, stabilized Minimum ambiguity Secrecy used for control</p>
<p>weak grid, weak group</p> <p>INDIVIDUALISTS No censorship Superstar generates information Information subject to fashions Secrecy disapproved Information hoarded to be allocated strategically</p>	<p>strong group, weak grid</p> <p>ENCLAVISTS Outside sources censored Information partitioned by factions Maximum ambiguity Secrecy used for control</p>

For sociologist Alan Scott (2009), Georg Simmel’s ‘sociology of secret societies’ implies a ‘cultural theory of organization’ similar to Douglas’. Simmel (1906) demonstrates

65 Unless they decide to organize themselves as a hierarchy nested within an enclave (the example given is of the Mormons); then they could be described in terms of the anthill (Douglas and Mars, 2003: 768).

66 Perhaps this is because Douglas and Mars focus on enclaves specifically and want to move away from a more metaphorical and abstract description to a more literal and concrete explanation that could have policy implications.

that ‘the secret’ is a variety of social relationship based on mutual trust. There are groups for which ‘the secret’ acts as the underlying principle of their organization, namely ‘secret societies’. From Simmel’s analysis of secret societies Scott deduces that they could be organized as *both* a hierarchy (positionist) *and* an enclave (enclavist) or *both* a hierarchy *and* a network (individualist)⁶⁷. (Scott 2009:275-279). How ways of life are allied in secret societies, for instance, could be akin to how ways of life are allied in national political cultures⁶⁸. For example, Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands could be described as an alliance of a hierarchical (positionist) and egalitarian (enclavist) ways of life⁶⁹ while the United Kingdom could be described as an alliance of a hierarchical (positionist) and individualist ways of life (Mamadouh 1997).

While the four cultures are recast by Douglas and Mars using the metaphor of ‘information control systems’, ‘knowledge’ is in the background. According to organization theorist Philippe Baumard ([1996]2001: 20), “[i]nformation is but a medium to initiate and formalize knowledge”, which is the organization’s foremost role. This is consistent with the process, described in CT, by which information is demarcated from background noise, audited for consumption, and integrated into culturally-appropriate knowledge⁷⁰. According to CT, it is through this knowledge that social control is enacted in its cultural specifics. Following this logic, knowledge, instead of information, is actually central. Perhaps, the cultures might better be called ‘knowledge control systems’⁷¹.

As I mentioned in section 2.2, one of the main processes taken by social scientists for eliciting abductive reasoning and gain new insights is moving between the data and theory. This is the basic procedure for my results below.

5 Results

Before I go into the results proper I would like to point out some of the clues in the content and form of the text that had me initiate an inquiry into the question of ‘culture’ in

67 And, I would conjecture, some other configurations as well.

68 Thus, CT can applied from the individuals with ‘multiple selves’ (not to be confused with ‘multiple personality disorder’) to nation-states (e.g. Mamadouh 1999; Thompson et al. 1990)

69 I would conjecture that Finland probably falls into this category.

70 From the perspective of CT, knowledge, as it is derived from information, is inevitably constituted by uncertain stuff.

71 This reminds me of Michel Foucault’s ‘knowledge/power’. It would be interesting to work through how they might be related.

the *Art of War*. Being that it is a military treatise, it may seem obvious that its biases would be firmly entrenched in the positionist culture, for the military is *the* hierarchical organization *par excellence*. Still, as Mair points out, while “[t]he hierarchy of organizational levels in the army is alluded to in the *Sun Zi*” it is “not discussed in detail...[for] the authors of the *Sun Zi*...were preoccupied with more theoretical, political, and psychological aspects of war” (2007:20-21). This may simply be because the how-to of administering an army was already covered in other known works of the time (for example, a now-lost treatise called *Army Administration* the *Sun Zi* quotes in chapter 7). There seems to be more to the lack of explicit emphasis on strict hierarchy than that, though. For example, after receiving his mandate from the ruler a general has the right to follow those orders or not depending on whether he feels it is a prudent course of action (Sun Zi trans Mair 2007:115). In a traditional hierarchy this could not be possible. Another clue that the *Art of War* is not promoting a positionist way of life in particular involves the use of spies in chapter 13. While spies are crucial to the war effort, they are *not* soldiers; therefore, they lie *outside* of the army’s hierarchical structure. Besides clues in the content, if one considers the composite nature and, consequentially, the loose arrangement or form of the text the potential for more than one culture’s biases also arises. In this way the *Art of War* might actually represent a collage of cultural biases. These are issues that require a deeper look if one’s goal is to comprehend the culture ‘found’ in the text. This calls for certain steps to be taken first.

In order to move between the *Art of War* and Cultural Theory abductively I first had to organize all of the information I had available about the ‘four cultures’ into a more helpful format, a chart, which as Mills finds is “a genuine tool of production” (1959:213). While in the process of organizing the information into a chart, gaps in the information became apparent. This required me to deduce the missing information from the literature reviewed. It also allowed me the opportunity to cross-check the consistency of some of the previous theorizing in CT and make adjustments where needed. Some other heuristic devices were also implemented. For example, I thought through some of the more abstract statements given by scholars (e.g. Douglas and Mars 2003) by imagining how they might play out in a more concrete sense as suggested by Jaccard and Jacoby (2009:56). I also followed the logic of a proposition to its most extreme outcome as promoted by both Mills

(1959:213-214) and Jaccard and Jacoby (2009:58). Once the chart (Table 5.1) was completed, I used it as a checklist (highlighting concepts in red) to see which culture or cultures *could* be represented by the *Art of War*. Finally, I went to the text to find evidence for my conjectures. The results of this uncomplicated but effective ‘method’ reveal that the *Art of War* is comprised of a hybrid culture somewhere between the positionist and individualist cultures on the grid-group typology.

Table 5.1: The Four Cultures

(Based on Douglas 1978, 1996, 1999, 2007; Douglas and Mars 2003; Hood 1998; Mamadouh 1999; Thompson 1982; Thompson et al. 1990)

*Information deduced from the literature

**Highlighted concepts indicate possible link to the *Sun Zi*

Label	Isolate	Individualist	Positionist	Enclavist
Grid-group	strong grid, weak group	weak grid, weak group	strong group, strong grid	strong group, weak grid
Examples	prisoners, sweatshop workers, the destitute	free markets, social networks	bureaucracies, corporations , the military	trade unions, monastic orders, kibbutzim
Underlying principle and key value	fate and survival	competition and gains (wealth and power)	traditional order and loyalty	black-and-white thinking and equality
View of nature	nature as ‘capricious’ and random	nature as ‘benign’ and durable	nature as ‘perverse’ and ‘tolerant’	nature as ‘ephemeral’ and fragile
View of human nature	unstable, worthy of suspicion	always self-seeking	born sinful but redeemable by ‘good institutions’	basically good but susceptible to corruption by institutions
Internal conflict resolution	*outside intervention	*‘one on one’ either face-to-face or via some media outlet so long as there is an audience or indirectly via cheating and deception	high level of classification and various strategies for re-classifying	real or supposed external threat, otherwise very challenging
Source(s) of information	whatever happens to come from authorities, while the rest is	‘superstar’ generates information , thus subject to fashions	*top-down and tradition-based	*doctrinal texts, insider interpretations

	unfounded or just not shared			
Information regulation	information regulated from afar, for insufficient information limits ability to form own institutions	no censorship; intersubjective agreement required to gain acceptance; information hoarded by 'superstar' to be allocated strategically	information censored, stabilized, apportioned according to prescribed roles; information access used for reward and punishment	outside sources censored, information filtered and interpreted, partitioned by factions
Quality of meaning	*maximum ambiguity	*moderate ambiguity (just enough to keep people talking about the 'superstar')	minimum ambiguity	maximum ambiguity
Secrecy	*either there are 'no' secrets because of constant surveillance or secrets are disregarded as insignificant	secrecy disapproved (*at least officially, effective 'hoarding' requires security measures)	secrecy used for control	secrecy used for control
Manipulation	'survival individualist'	'manipulative individualist'	'manipulative collectivist'	'survival collectivist' ⁷²
At culture's extreme	*severely oppressed by an authoritarian or totalitarian regime with no popular resistance to speak of	cult-like following with positionist or enclavist tendencies	leadership inaccessible, dominates from a distance where, in place of persons, social control is exerted through objects	*utopian goals of equality 'justify' repressive regime and mass purging
Not surprised when...	caution does not work, skill is not rewarded, and events are unpredictable	there are unexpected runs of good luck, others prosper, and competition is rife	there are unexpected runs of good luck and bad luck, others prosper, and when there is a partial collapse	expected windfalls don't happen and when there is total collapse
Game metaphor (Hood, 1989: 187)	game of chance like roulette	individual game of skill like chess	captained game like American football	non-captained, noncompetitive, team sport like folk dancing

While elements of the positionist rationality figure strongly in the *Art of War* as they would in a military treatise, this is not necessarily the underlying cultural principle that drives some of its key features such as the use of spying. I would argue that that distinction

⁷² From the perspective of an outside threat (especially if it's from mainstream society) enclavists could be seen as 'survival collectivists', but what about the use of censorship and secrecy to control information?

actually goes to the individualist culture. The most decisive factor in the text that demonstrates how the military hierarchy shifts from its base in traditional order to one nested within an individualist rationality concerns relationships, more specifically, the relationships between a general and a ruler, a general and his spies, and a general and the populace.

In a positionist culture a sovereign, or other leader of some sort, is considered the top of the societal 'pyramid'. The *Sun Zi* seems to argue that war is a time where normative social structures are suspended for the sake of state security; this includes the 'place' of the ruler. While a general receives his mandate from the sovereign to face their enemies in battle, once this mandate is received the relationship between the general and the ruler takes a different turn. A general should be aware that there are three ways that a ruler can undermine his own military capabilities and, basically, hand victory over to his enemies. Firstly, if a ruler calls for an advance or retreat without understanding whether the army could actually advance or retreat, he 'hobbles' it. Secondly, if a ruler attempts to administer the army, which has its own code, according to the protocols of the state, he arouses confusion. Thirdly, if a ruler attempts to supervise the officers and troops without understanding their suitability, he arouses doubts. When the army is rife with confusion and doubt the neighboring rulers will take notice and attempt to take advantage of the situation. (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007:86). Therefore, it is the general's prerogative to obey or disobey the ruler's orders depending on whether the general finds them conducive to winning a battle or not (ibid. 115, also 106). Despite the circumstances of wartime, this could be seen as a serious affront to a sovereign's rule. Furthermore, not only does the general have the right to follow the ruler's explicit instructions, or not, he also has the right to follow other laws and customs (conceivably, those also instated by previous rulers), or not. One telling example comes from chapter 11, one of the core chapters of the work, where Sun Zi advises that a general should "offer rewards that exceed legal limits, deliver orders [for meritorious service] that go beyond administrative norms" in order to unify his forces into "a single man" (ibid. 123). In this manner, a general is following the *dao* or the 'way'⁷³, which in chapter 1 refers to that which unifies the ruler and the people (ibid. 77) but here refers to

73 As previously stated the 'way' (*dao*) here does not refer to a metaphysical concept but concerns more practical matters; so it cannot be argued that Sun Zi is advocating a more 'spiritual-minded' general.

the general and his troops. The general follows the ‘way’ but at the expense of legal and customary practices. Again, this could be seen as a serious affront to a sovereign’s rule. It also seems paradoxical in light of the fact that the *Sun Zi* also states that “[h]e who is skilled at waging war cultivates the way *and* protects the law” (ibid. 90, my italics). Understood from the positionist culture, these statements are definitely at odds because laws, which have the appearance of being impartial, are actually meant to reify and reinforce the traditional way of life that *already* binds the people and their ruler, in other words, the hierarchical social structure and the people’s places within it. For one deep-rooted in the positionist culture any other way of life is basically unthinkable. On the other hand, if seen from an individualist cultural perspective, these statements are *not* paradoxical. I would argue that in both cases where a general does not comply with either the ruler’s orders or the rule of law it is because the logic of victory supersedes the logic of tradition and order. That is, the underlying cultural principle is not that of the positionist but rather that of the individualist.

The relationship between the general and spies also provides another example of how an individualist cultural logic overtakes a positionist one in the *Art of War*. This occurs in two instances. The first instance concerns ‘foreknowledge’. Foreknowledge cannot be gained by traditional means, e.g. various forms of divination or even classical Chinese argumentation⁷⁴, especially in regards to knowing one’s opponent as emphasized at the end of chapters 3 (ibid. 87) and 10 (ibid. 116). Instead, the sort of foreknowledge from which action that will lead to victory can be taken originates from first-rate espionage (ibid. 131). Here, the *Art of War* makes a sharp break with the past. The second instance of the predominance of individualist cultural logic involves the spies themselves. As I mentioned previously, because spies are not soldiers they are not part of the hierarchical structure of the military, yet there is nowhere in the text that explicitly mentions how spies would be incorporated into the overall military scheme. Once again turning to chapter 11, however, we find that a general should “stupefy [the] eyes and ears of officers and troops” in order to hide the preparation and implementation of tactics, stratagems, and overall strategy (ibid. 121; see also Mair 2007:157, n.19 and 20). Following this logic, this implies that spies,

74 Analogy is explicitly mentioned in the *Sun Zi*, but other forms of classical Chinese argumentation that could also be included are argument from authority, argument by historical example, and argument from ritualistic practices, to name but a few (see Liu 2007).

who provide the key information on which these decisions will be based, should be directly answerable to the general. Once more, we find the general working outside the bounds of the seemingly dominant positionist culture. This is permissible, though, in light of individualist rationality since the end goal of quality espionage is victory (ibid. 129), the individualist's core value.

How the *Art of War* depicts the relationship between the general and the populace even further underscores that the individualist cultural logic is its principal logic. It is the general, not the ruler, that is called the 'buttress' (or 'protector', according to Griffith's translation) of the state (ibid. 86). As I have shown above, aside from protecting the state from its enemies, a capable general must also protect the state from the military incompetence of its own ruler even if it means disobeying his or her direct orders. Noncompliance is acceptable if it is followed by victory, and victory is necessitated upon the foreknowledge that can only be derived from the use of spies. As the author(s) of chapter 13 make clear, paying for and wisely utilizing secret intelligence is part of the general's service to the ruler and to the people (ibid. 129). Still, this is not the limit of a general's mandate, according to the *Sun Zi*. Part of the 'protective services' the general provides is the proper management of the military during wartime which, if poorly managed or the war is protracted, taxes the resources—human, material, and fiscal—of the populace at large (this is the main thrust of chapter 2). Thus, a competent general also 'protects' the people from the incapacitating consequences of a prolonged and/or improperly managed war. Taken together, this sharpens my opening point that for the authors of the *Sun Zi* wartime suspends some important aspects of the 'normal' hierarchical order of the state, making the general the ultimate "arbiter of fate for the people" (ibid. 83) in place of, or, at least, side by side with, the sovereign. Analogically, if the sovereign is the capstone of the societal pyramid then, in times of war, the capstone is basically suspended above while the general's is its highest tier.

So if Sun Zi's general is situated within the confines of the traditional order of the military hierarchy *and* that of his society, what separates him from an unswervingly loyal military 'bureaucrat', i.e., a positionist general? It is the drive to win, for that is "[t]he purpose of engaging in battle" (ibid. 81). Even then, "being victorious a hundred times in a hundred battles is *not* the most excellent approach. Causing the enemy forces to submit

without a battle is the most excellent approach.” (ibid. 85, my italics). This is the logic of victory through and through. Sun Zi’s general is able to exchange the positionist rationality for the rationality of the individualist (and vice versa) when it suits his goals. It is this cultural logic that dictates when the traditional order should be upheld or not. Now, let us view this issue from another angle.

If we review the aforementioned results through the metaphor of ‘information control systems’ the way that Douglas and Mars (2003) do, we again find that both the individualist and positionist cultures can be seen in the text. This time around, the general is advised to be more positionist than individualist and even exhibit features of the fatalist as well. Here I follow the order of the chart in first discussing the source of the information, next, the way that the information is regulated, then, the quality of its meaning, and, finally, whether secrecy is utilized and to what degree.

From within an individualist culture, the ‘superstar’, that key figure in a social network, is the source of the information, whereas from a positionist culture I deduced that information is top-down (that is, from the upper tiers) and tradition-based, which I believe is in line with previous theorizing in CT. As we read in chapter 1 of the *Art of War*, the general must have a sufficient amount of knowledge (of the socio-political unity between the ruler and the people, of the weather and terrain⁷⁵, of the capability of the opposing general, of the strength of the army, and so on) in order to make the initial assessments to decide whether he will emerge victorious from engaging in battle or not. While it is so that he gains foreknowledge through the use of his spies (chapter 13), he is the ‘superstar’ that generates the information. It should be noted that the type of information that the general receives and transmits is not based on past experience or custom (like the positionist culture) nor is it subject to fashions (like the individualist culture), at least, not ideally. Instead, it comes from the ‘man (or woman) on the ground’, but because “[w]arfare is a way of deception” the possibility of the general receiving misinformation and/or disinformation is ever-present. Still, being that the general is the highest tier of the military hierarchy, the information, corrupted or otherwise, travels from him down to the other tiers. The information is not transmitted in the same form that the general received it, though. It

75 This is a positionist view of nature, whether in the form of weather or terrain, for it is knowable, predictable, for the most part, and, thus, useful against the enemy.

must first be censored and apportioned, by him, according to the prescribed roles of his officers and other soldiers. They are, as it is said, on a ‘need-to-know basis’. Regardless of whether they understand the deeper significance of their orders or not, they *must* follow them. This form of information regulation is very much in line with the positionist ‘information control system’. Within the individualist culture while the ‘superstar’ stores information to be apportioned ‘strategically’, seemingly like the general does, censorship is frowned upon; anyone could, technically, have access to the same information, in one way or another. These are *not* the same kinds of social control. What can be said about the quality of the information being transmitted?

In terms of the quality of the information’s meaning, the *Sun Zi* advocates different degrees of ambiguity for different purposes. For positionists information should contain ‘minimum ambiguity’. Every person should clearly understand the information they are allotted them so as to function within their social roles. For individualists I deduced that the information could contain ‘moderate ambiguity’ or just enough ambiguity to keep people talking or writing about the ‘superstar’, thereby keeping his or her node glowing at the center of the network. For fatalists I deduced that the information would contain ‘maximum ambiguity’ like the enclavists, but instead of using the ambiguity for consensus and cohesion like the enclavists do, ambiguity is used by those that regulate the information to prolong the fatalists’ dissensus and disarray. The quality of meaning that the general generates should conceivably be, in turns, of minimal, moderate, *and* maximal ambiguity. That is not what the *Sun Zi* explicitly advances. Neither “deeply planted spies” nor even the “masses” (both civilians and military personnel) should know how a general “produce[s] victory...a body of soldiers has no constant configuration; a body of water has no constant form.” In other words, they should be ‘formless’, their shape, ambiguous so as to strike organically at the ‘empty’ points of an enemy’s form. (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007:99). When it comes to the quality of the meaning of the information, maximum ambiguity, an ostensibly fatalist cultural logic, is openly advocated. For the authors of the *Sun Zi* it may be obvious that minimum ambiguity is required if the officers and soldiers are to perform their tasks properly and, perhaps, that is why they do not explicitly mention it. In a military context, ambiguity is intimately connected with secrecy.

For positionists secrecy is used for control, while for individualists secrecy is criticized as censorship is and for basically the same reasons—everyone should have access to as much information as possible in order to get a chance to compete. I think that while secrecy may be disapproved of ‘officially’ by individualist culture, pragmatically, it is too useful to dispense with. Plus, any effective storing up of information to be utilized later, as the individualist superstar does, requires security measures that necessarily entail secrecy. Herein lies a potential gap in the theorizing on ‘information control systems’. For the *Art of War*, the general should be unabashedly positionist in terms of using secrecy for control—control over the general’s own army (e.g. *ibid.* 121) as well as control over his enemy’s. The general is “[s]ubtle... insubstantial...inaudible, [for] the expert leaves no trace...” (Sun Zi trans. Griffith 1963:97). Overall, while the ‘information control system’ that the *Art of War* promotes is mostly of a positionist persuasion with hints of the fatalist, one must not forget that they are necessarily nested within an individualist culture.

Throughout the *Art of War* runs a cord of rationality, double-braided. In practice it manifests by means of exploiting the conventional in conjunction with the unconventional in order to manipulate the enemy (see chapters 5 and 6, specifically). This I would argue is the hallmark of the *Art of War*, for it is by the collaboration of the unconventional and the conventional that “[v]ictory...can be *created*” (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007:98, my italics). The supporting examples taken from the text come from chapters written and compiled by different authors at different times, yet, socioculturally, their message is cohesive. Cultural theoretically, then, the *Sun Zi* argues that a general should be an amalgam of a ‘manipulative collectivist’ (positionist) way of life *and* a ‘manipulative individualist’ (individualist) way of life for the intention of becoming a potent manipulator who, through deft manipulations, can achieve total victory.

The results of a sociological reading of the *Art of War* are meant to be more suggestive than anything else. I made a number of unconventional moves to reach this point. As I stated in the ‘Structure’ subsection (2.2), Mills’ ‘intellectual craftsmanship’ is rarely, if ever, used as a ‘methodology’. Although if one goes by Silverman’s (2001:4) basic definition of methodology as a way of “go[ing] about studying a phenomenon”, then it should qualify because that it exactly how I went about studying the phenomenon of ‘culture’ in the *Sun Zi*. While my ‘data’ is text-based I do not use any qualitative methods

to speak of or *any* formal methods, for that matter. The intention was to employ Mills' methodological tools to help amplify my 'unfettered thought' as *the* 'method'. Furthermore, my data is a singular text (usually not standard practice for an empirical study), though, I suppose, it could be argued that I investigate the *Art of War* as a sort of Foucauldian 'master narrative' without Foucault's theoretical tools. With that said, if someone were to 'replicate' my study by following the route I described in the beginning of this section I believe they might come close to my general findings. The question, then, becomes how reliable were the deductions I made to fill the gaps of information in the chart that I compiled. Verifying those deductions would basically require a study of its own or, at least, more space than is permitted in this paper but then that would also miss the point of using the chart heuristically. Finally, the question remains of whether one would be able to reach similar results through more conventional means. This is a valid question, but that would defeat the purpose. All in all, I find that unconventional means *can* produce results, and they should not get short shrift.

6 Discussion

6.1 Methodological and theoretical contributions

I address the methodological and theoretical contributions in previous sections so I will just reiterate them briefly here. In terms of methodological contributions, I attempt to explicate the logical underpinning of C. Wright Mills' 'intellectual craftsmanship', add to its creative tools, and actually utilize it methodologically in answering my research questions. I attempt to demonstrate that unconventional means, whether in the form of the arrangement of a research paper, the choices of one's research methodology, the type of data, to the choice of method, or lack thereof, can be productive within the context of a research paper.

In terms of theoretical contributions there are three main parts. First, I attempt to extend the applicability of Cultural Theory by demonstrating its utility in analyzing an ancient Chinese text. While I only hint at how surprise in abductive reasoning could be socioculturally grounded in CT's theory of surprise, I have a strong intuition that this could be a profitable avenue of research. Furthermore, they could be combined with the study of other topics I touched on like deception, another concept that gets scant sociological

treatment. Second, I attempt to add something to current *Sun Zi* scholarship by proposing that the work is made up of basically two competing ways of life that are, for the most part, in a form of equilibrium so as to advance an integrated message about how a general might better emerge victorious in battle. Third, I attempt to read Cultural Theory through the *Art of War* and utilize it strategically below.

6.2 Strategic issues

Here I provide a sketch of how Cultural Theory could be read through the *Art of War* and applied to strategic ends. Since, as Sun Zi counsels, in warfare, whether one fights or does not fight, the goal is to win, the most interesting question to me refers back to the title of this research paper—how might one use cultural biases to win? As the *Sun Zi* advises one must know one's opponent and know one's self. As far as knowing one's opponent, this requires high-quality information gathering of some sort. Once the information, gaps and all, is at hand, CT essentially becomes a frame for reading the information and a heuristic device for discovering the overall way an opponent thinks grounded in his or her way of life as well as the weak points that inevitably come with it. Since there are only four or five cultures and only so many alliances that they can form together, this considerably narrows down the possible strategic choices one's opponent could make. Granted, this would necessarily entail a reduction of complexity, but it would also entail an increase in expeditious decision-making about one's opponent's choices with the intention of taking action, effectively, 'beating them to the punch'.

CT can also be used in a reflexive manner to 'know one's self' by helping to discover what cultural biases one *might* have. This is somewhat akin to Nowacki's (2004:337 italics in original) sixth 'philosophical' culture whose "[c]ritical rationality...is willing to put *all* of its principles and presuppositions into question" in order to attain truth. One must be severe with one's own cultural biases for three main reasons. The first reason for being severe with one's cultural biases is related to the weak points that inevitably come with a certain way of perceiving reality which, is at the same time, a way of *not* perceiving reality. One's weak points need to be found and fortified, for a clever opponent will eventually strike there if and when they want to win. The second reason for being severe with one's cultural biases is related to knowing one's self, for in doing so one can avoid deceiving oneself which makes getting deceived by one's opponent that much easier. The

third reason is related to knowing one's opponent. One should attempt to know one's opponent as they 'are' not as they are perceived through one's culture; in this way, one can be better equipped to deceive them. Being severe with one's cultural biases is an absolute necessity. One must always keep in mind that "warfare is a way of deception".

In the *Sun Zi* 'deception' is not synonymous with lying as might be supposed. As professor of international relations and Chinese history Arthur Waldron points out, deception (*gui dao* 詭道, literally "deception way") in the *Sun Zi* is more than just military trickery. It means "to subvert the foundation upon which all society and human activity is believed, by Chinese philosophers, to rest" (Waldron foreward in Mair 2007:xix); this 'foundation' is the *dao* or 'moral way'. For Sun Zi, the *dao* is "that which causes the people to be of the same mind with their superior. Therefore, [t]hey are committed to die with him, [t]hey are committed to live with him and not fear danger" (trans. Mair 2007:77). As a result, for Waldron, deception in the ancient Chinese way of thinking is "far more grave and potentially far more powerful than any mere 'deception' would be in the west" (foreward in Mair 2007:xix). Although Waldron may be overstating this distinction between 'East' and 'West'⁷⁶, I do not think he is overstating the potentiality of the *Art of War*. From my point of view, deception in the *Sun Zi* is no less than the manipulation or fabrication⁷⁷ of sociocultural reality itself, the very subject matter of Cultural Theory.

How then can one use CT to deceive an opponent and get closer to victory? According to CT, individuals are "self-contained regime[s]" made up of alliances of cultures (Thompson et al. 1990:265–67). So even while one culture overrules the others, one already has the cultural 'infrastructure' to build upon. CT already provides readymade designs for what these cultures include. So, then, it just becomes a process of consciously learning and internalizing all of their forms of rationality so that one accentuate, down play, or mix this or that culture as the circumstances require. One then takes on a protean persona

76 The "stratagemic doctrine" military doctrine of the ancient Greeks and Romans, which consists of planning, foresight, timing and the general's "instant analysis" or *anchinoia* (Greek for "quickness of thought"), later called *coup d'oeil* (French for "at a glance"), comes closer to what Sun Zi and other like-minded ancient Chinese military theorists as well as the ancient Indian kingmaker and 'political scientist' Kautilya advocate than what is commonly known as 'deception' in English today (Mair 2007:42-46; Wheeler 1988:23, 29; Wheeler 2003:1-6). In addition, Barton Whaley's (1982:182) academic perspective on military deception as the "distortion of perceived reality" fits, for the most part, with what Sun Zi advances.

77 Military historian Joseph Caddell makes the following distinction between a fabrication and a manipulation: fabrications are false information presented as true while manipulations are the use of true information presented out of context to create a false impression (2004:1).

(a possible seventh culture?). One could take on an opponent's culture, mirroring them for the purposes of lulling them with what they take for granted or infuriating them. One could play the part of the 'fatalist', society's underdog, thereby appearing incapable when one is capable, one of Sun Zi's maxims and the classic 'feign weakness' stratagem. One could play the part of the 'mad dog', an extreme version of the fatalist, which worked for Hamlet and David in an episode before he became king and works for North Korea. Living as one's opponent does can go to extremes in two main ways, though.

One may actually 'become' one's opponent; in CT terms this essentially means that one accepts the other's way of life as one's own and exchanges cultures, consciously or unconsciously. One can also find that there are points of contact between oneself and one's opponent wherein one discovers that one's goals can be accomplished better through cooperation than competition. Transforming opponents into allies is definitely one way to win without fighting. Conflict can become concord and as long as one still emerges victorious that is the *Art of War*. While none of this information is necessarily new, the application of Cultural Theory as an approach to the 'art of war' in the spirit of the *Sun Zi*, especially in terms of making speedier, culturally-informed decisions, is novel and worthy of further study.

6.3 Moral considerations

In this subsection I would like to address possible ethical issues that might arise from using Sun Zi's *Art of War* and Cultural Theory for the purposes of deception as I have described above. To be clear, deception as the *Sun Zi* describes it is akin to the word 'stratagem'⁷⁸. Some of the stratagems described in the previous section are based on deception, but not all stratagems are deceptive. They can include such things as bribery, the sophisticated reading of documents, and treaties. (Wheeler 1988:21; 2003:1). Since ancient times, stratagems, in all their diversity, proliferated (and still do) through oral and written media as diverse as Biblical proverbs, Aesop's fables, the ancient Chinese epic the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and so on. If one takes the example of the Scriptures a distinction is made between lying and bearing false witness, which are abhorred by God

⁷⁸ First used (for 'military ploy') in the late 15th century, from Middle French *stratageme* from Italian *stratagemma* via Latin *strategema* from Greek *stratēgēma* 'generalship', from *stratēgein* 'to be a general', from *stratēgos* 'a general', from *stratos* 'army' + *agein* 'to lead' (adapted from Merriam-Webster and Oxford online dictionaries as well as freedictionary.com and thesaurus.com).

(e.g. Proverbs 6:16-19 New American Standard Bible), and stratagems which can be deceptive. Stratagems (called *tahbulot* in Hebrew) can and, it is strongly implied, *should* be learned by the ‘intelligent’ (ibid. Proverbs 1:5). These *tahbulot* are a “sophisticated level of knowledge...that can be put to any purpose, such as in waging war” and can be learned from the book of Proverbs (Fox 2000:37). Even studying cases, like the Israelite commander Joshua’s battle with the king of Ai (Joshua 8), can generate stratagems that can then be applied metonymically from the military domain to other social arenas as they have been in the past (Wheeler 1988:21). Some people today view deception as inherently immoral; others see the use of deception as not immoral but simply *amoral*. For certain ancients like Homer, Sun Zi, and Solomon the ability to devise and utilize stratagems, deceptive or otherwise, was closely related to wisdom and could also comprise foresight, timing, good fortune, finesse, discretion, discipline, indirection, ingenuity, credibility, speed, subtleness, benevolence, boldness, guesswork, versatility, vigilance, expedience, and the veteran’s experience. So instead of being fundamentally immoral, what designates the artful employment of stratagems, deceptive or otherwise, as either praise- or blame-worthy, moral or immoral is not *that* they are used but *how* they are used and to what ends. (Baumard [1996]2001:53-72; Chia and Holt 2010:192-197; Detienne and Vernant 1978:14; Fox 2000:30-38; Raphals 1992:224; Sun Zi trans Griffith 1963:65; Wheeler 1988:21, 109-110).

7 Conclusion

The intersection of Sun Zi’s *Art of War* and Douglasian Cultural Theory has been an opportunity to show how fruitful the coming together of an ancient, Chinese military treatise as data and a modern, ‘Western’ sociocultural theory can be. While at first glance they may appear to be somewhat of an antithetical pair, there are incremental steps connecting them as if on a continuum. Starting in the middle, where my reasoning resides, I employed heuristic devices to take abductive leaps from one step to the next. At one end of the continuum, I gave a sociocultural reading of the *Art of War* and found that the *Art of War* is made up two competing cultures forged together for victory. Then, I turned around and took more abductive leaps toward the other end of the continuum and gave a Sun Zi-inspired reading of Cultural Theory. I found that Cultural Theory can be used to know the

one's opponent and know one's self, to avoid deception and to deceive. One could essentially exploit cultural biases to win without fighting.

Generally speaking, “[i]t is common to join battle with conventional tactics and to achieve victory though unconventional tactics” (Sun Zi trans. Mair 2007:92).

I hope that this research paper has been both interesting and advantageous for the sociologist, the cultural theorist, the scholar and the practitioner of the *Sun Zi* alike.

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